



On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering Anniversary Edition

John Paul II

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Published on February 11, 1984, *Salvifici Doloris* addresses the question of why God allows suffering. In this apostolic letter, Pope John Paul II reflects on the origins of suffering, explores the different types of suffering we endure, examines our quest to discover its meaning and purpose, and explains how we are to respond to suffering. He links our personal experiences with suffering to the mystery of humanity, of God, and to the redemption brought by Christ's suffering. This expanded anniversary edition offers the complete text of the letter, along with thought-provoking commentary by Myles N. Sheehan, SJ, MD. As a priest and a physician who was trained in geriatrics and specialized in palliative care, Dr. Sheehan approaches the topic of suffering from firsthand experience and extends his warm compassion to readers. This edition incorporates relevant biographical elements of John Paul II's life and of the respective historical period. It also makes the content of the papal document more accessible and places it in the context of recent world events, including September 11th, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and gun violence incidents in schools and public places across the nation. Each of the eight sections of the original document contains insightful questions suited for individual or group use, applicable prayers, and ideas for meaningful action, inviting readers to personally respond to the mystery of suffering. Whether you are revisiting or introducing yourself to this letter, it will help you work through the question that we all ask ourselves at some point in our lives: "Why suffering?" It is only natural to wonder why a person is the target for some sort of suffering—a chronic illness, the loss of a loved one, depression, a natural disaster, an act of violence, financial crisis...the list could go on.

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