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God is closest at the darkest hour

You are burdened. Life weighs you down. You often find it hard just to get through the day. You feel caught in a never-ending storm. There is nowhere to hide from the fierce winds that threaten to destroy you. You feel as if everyone is against you. You may even feel like a stranger in your own family.

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For many, this will seem exaggerated. For others I have known, these words barely begin to express the feeling of depression that engulfs them.

If you are one of those for whom these words seem exaggerated, look around you. You will see someone who needs a cheerful smile and a word of kindness—someone who is on the brink of giving up, someone who needs hope.

If you are one of those going through a time of trial, I would say something different. Don't look at anything. Close your eyes and pray. You'll tell me it's useless. You'll tell me you've already tried. You'll tell me God is not listening to you.

Allow me to insist. Close your eyes and talk to God. Tell him how miserable you feel. Don't expect him to change everything. Don't expect consolation. Just tell God that your

faith is dying. And if you are angry with God, tell him. Don't try to dress it up. Tell him. And after you tell him, make your act of surrender to his will: "God, I know there must be a reason why all this is happening to me. God, you have to help me. Give me enough faith to get through another day."

If we want to reach the kingdom of God, we must endure a trial by fire. We all reach that point in life when we feel like a child who has fallen off the side of a cliff, hanging with one hand, clutching a rope, wondering how long we can hold on before we let go and fall into the abyss.

That's what Good Friday is all about. It was Jesus himself who reached that point. It was Jesus himself who was hanging on a cross. It was Jesus himself who had to cry out: "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"

Even though Jesus was the Son of God, he had to suffer in order to obey the will of his Father in heaven.

When your moment of trial comes, remember the words of Scripture.

“During his life on earth, he offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard.”

Jesus had to die so that he could rise again. So, never despair. It is precisely when everything is going wrong that God is closest to you.

This article by Fr. Joe Babendreier first appeared in the Sunday Nation on 11th April 2011.

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