



# The Passion of Christ

## Study Guide

Through Scripture and examples from life, Fr. Rolheiser gives new understanding and encouragement in how we can give our lives to the world and to also give our death to the world. When we think of passion we think of Christ's physical suffering and death. That perception "gets it" and "misses it." The word "passion" comes from the Latin word for passiveness. It describes Jesus' passiveness rather than his activity. Christ's gift to us is the activity of Jesus Christ, his healing, preaching and teaching. This is up to the point that he gets off the ground in the garden. From that time on, is his passion, his passivity; things are done to him. We are saved as much or more by his passivity as by his activity.

In the Agony in the Garden, the Gospels do not emphasize Jesus' physical sufferings. The Gospel writers want us to understand Jesus the lover, who undergoes moral and emotional sufferings without resentment or bitterness. God's strength comes when we are exhausted and open to being transformed.

### Discussion Questions

#### PART I

The Passion of Christ refers to Jesus' passivity, not to his physical suffering and death. After a life of activity, now Jesus is passive and things are done to him. In what way does this change or deepen my understanding of Jesus and his passion?

- 1.) We are saved as much by our activity as by our passivity. Why do I agree (or disagree) with this statement?
- 2.) Who has "given me their death?" How did they enrich my life by their death?
- 3.) "Passivities" are not just when we die – it is anytime when we are helpless to achieve something, when we are lonely, or powerless to achieve a dream. Grace can flow through the world through my passivity only if I am not filled with resentment and bitterness. When have I been able to do this?
- 4.) How can I live so that my death can be a blessing for my family and friends?

#### PART II

- 1.) In the Agony in the Garden, Jesus was "a stone's throw away" from his disciples. That is, he was experiencing that loneliness in which the deepest part of us is alone. What in my life helps me to understand him in this experience?
- 2.) To be "morally lonely" is when I don't have anyone with me—the deepest part of me is not being honored by anyone. That is when I have to be faithful. No one can be with me then. This is the agony in the garden. Can I still give my life over without bitterness or resentment? What moral decisions have I had to make during times of intense loneliness?
- 3.) The agony (agonia) is an athletic or "active" image. Jesus readies himself for death. Have you thought about your "readiness" for death as if you were an athlete in training?
- 4.) The Garden is a place for special prayers, when I feel particularly helpless. When have I prayed:
  - a) The prayer of great familiarity –addressing God as my loving parent.
  - b) The prayer of great trust –"that all things are possible."
  - c) The prayer of complete honesty –taking my resistance to God and admitting "I don't want to do this."
  - d) The prayer of transformation – realizing that I may need to continually ask.
- 5.) Transformation comes at the ultimate moment of loneliness. Liminal space is the space that changes us. Liminality is a period of transition, during which our normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior are relaxed, opening the way to something new. When we are transformed, we are never the same again. When have I experience this to be true?
- 6.) What did I find to be most memorable in this presentation?

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