

Have you ever wondered why we use the word “passion” to describe the suffering that Jesus went through? After all when we say we are passionate about something we mean that it is something we truly love. Two people in love are said to be passionate toward one another.

The word “passion” comes from a latin word, “patior” that means to suffer. The word compassion, for example, means to “suffer with.” So suffering and love are somehow connected.

When Saint Paul tells us that Jesus was in the form of God, he means that Jesus was equal to God. But this equality with God was not something to be held on to. So God poured Himself into our humanity, He completely emptied Himself, becoming fully a man. He lived as we live, He experienced our joys and our sorrows, and our sufferings, and then He died.

This is what we are worth to God, we are worth everything.

We all have a great question in our lives. Am I loved? We can run from that question, we can try to answer it in a thousand different ways, but it keeps coming back. Is there someone who loves me enough to die for me?

Saint Paul tells us that someone is God. God holds nothing back in His love for each one of us. In Jesus, He pours Himself out for you and for me.

We have all heard that God loves us so much that He gave up His only son for our sake. We hear that so often I sometimes think that we no longer recognize its meaning. We have ears, but we no longer hear. Do we fail to realize just how much God loves us?

Mel Gibson's film “The Passion of the Christ” cost an estimated \$30 million dollars to produce with an additional \$15 million spent on marketing. It took

over two years to produce and Mel Gibson had to provide the funds himself because studios were afraid of charges that the film was anti-semitic.

For the film, Gibson drew on many sources that are not in the Bible, such as the story of Veronica. We know Veronica from the stations of the cross as the woman who wipes the face of Jesus while He is carrying His cross.

The actress who played Veronica was an Italian woman in her early thirties. Although she had grown up Catholic, she had long ago stopped practicing her faith. At the time they began filming she was at a spiritual low point in her life. She later explained that she really wanted to believe in Jesus, but she simply couldn't.

In the movie, Jesus has fallen for the third time. The crowds are surging around Him, abusing Him while the Roman guards try to keep control.

Gliding through the middle of this confusion is Veronica. She looks at Him with love and devotion. She kneels down beside Him and says, "Lord, permit me." She takes a white cloth and wipes His blood and sweat stained face. Then she offers Him a drink. It is a beautiful moment of intimacy in the middle of violent suffering.

It was a very difficult scene to film. The crowd kept bumping into Veronica and disrupting that moment of intimacy the director wanted. So they had to film it over and over again.

After fifteen or twenty times of kneeling before the suffering Christ, looking into His eyes and calling Him Lord, the actress felt something start to melt inside her. Later she explained that while she looked into His eyes she found that she was able to believe. "For a moment," she said, "I believed."

It is entirely possible that in the eyes of God, two years, \$45 million, and countless problems and setbacks for hundreds of people, were worth a moment to reach the heart of one woman.

How many opportunities do we have, every day, to reach out to someone who desperately needs to hear that God loves them? How many Veronicas do we know that want to believe and are just waiting for someone to show them, by words or by deeds, that God can be trusted?

God holds nothing back in His passion for us, how can we hold anything back from Him?