

praying to somebody who didn't taste it in all its darkness. Remember the old translation of the Our Father? In place of "and lead us not into temptation," we used to say, "and do not put us to the test." What is the test? We are telling God something like, "God, in my life I know you can test me the way you tested Jesus. I know you can make me sweat blood, but cut me a little slack. Make these things easier for me in my life so I do not have to taste the complete darkness." That darkness is the test of the moral athlete, inside our moral loneliness. It is not the test of our physical capacity to withstand pain. The Passion is about something we are meant to imitate. It is about our moral and emotional athleticism the next time we have temptation. It is the test inside of love, and it happens in a garden.

When Jesus left the Last Supper room, He could not do it. That was the great transition. Only after He had broken down, had sweated the blood, had told the Father many times, "I do not want to do this," he finally broke down and accepted it. How many of us, in our own way, experience that frustration, that same sense of abandonment? Yet, at the moment of acceptance, God's liberating grace flows. As Luke says of Jesus in the garden, the angel comes. That's a deep theology of grace.

*(excerpted from: www.americancatholic.org)

******In that dark night, when evil had its way, Jesus found support in only One. "Abba, Father." A child's cry came from his heart. Cold fear, betrayal, the desertion of friends, the false judgments of others, the whips, the nails, the hard wood could not stop it. His childlike trust in God would not be broken, even through the hours of pain and tears.

When words no longer could be said, nor thoughts no longer formed, that confident prayer uttered in the garden would remain in Jesus' heart. "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you."

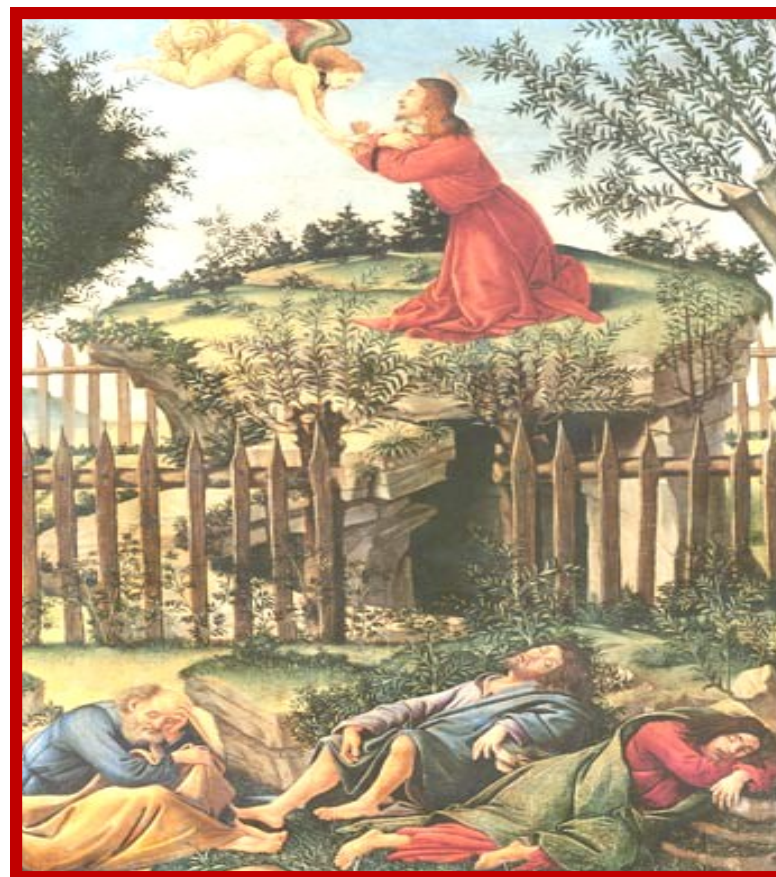
His prayer did not go unanswered. Luke's account of the agony of Jesus says: "An angel came from heaven to strengthen Him."

What does a disciple learn from this? That He will watch with us in the dark gardens of life? That He will teach us this same childlike prayer? That He will send an angel, too, to strengthen us?

***(excerpted from www.cptryon.org)

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Agony in the Garden



...Taking Peter, James and John He withdrew deeper into the Garden.

**They would witness now His fear and hear His anxious prayer. Going on alone, Jesus fell upon the ground and began to pray a doleful prayer : "Abba, "Father, all things are possible to you"; So troubled had He become, returning three times to seek His disciples' support he found them asleep! And He said:
... "Could Ye Not Watch With Me One Hour" ...**

Understanding the Passion of Jesus

*The Agony in the Garden, Christ sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, is one of the great texts in Scripture. That is because it's a deep text, one loaded with meaning. It's a moment, the few hours after the Last supper, that Jesus had to prepare for his death. This is the kind of pressure that brings life sharply into focus. What would we do if we knew we only have a few hours? How could that type of insight affect the choices we make between now and then? That is what the Agony in the Garden is all about.

There are three major aspects of the scriptural text. First, we will talk about the Passion of Christ, the context for the Agony in the Garden. Then we will enter with Jesus into the Garden and what was the real drama of the Garden of Gethsemane? Finally, we will look at some of the deeply moving images that are written into this text.

The word agony is a term from Scripture and not just a pious term. In Greek they talk about Christ's *agonia* which in Jesus' time was a technical term for what athletes did warming up for the Olympic Games. During that warm-up, the Greek athletes would produce a certain sweat which would warm up their muscles and ready them for combat. That sweat, was called their *agonia*. Luke 22, is telling us that Jesus does an *agonia* to get ready for His passion. The Agony in the Garden is the warm-up, the readying for the passion that follows.

What is the Passion of our Lord? The English word *passion*, gives us a false image because it refers to something that is very deep in terms of feeling love. With Jesus, not only do we have passion, we also have suffering. It is more a sense of passiveness. In Jesus' passivity, he gives His death for us, He gives His life for us. Christ not only gave His life but also his death for us. When blood and water poured out of the crucified Jesus, the blood, is the life principle that flows between us, it makes us alive, while water washes us. What the evangelist is saying at another level is that Jesus died in such a way that it makes us freer. We are able to live life; life flows more easily and we are able to live cleanly. That is when we are free of guilt.

Why did the drama happen in a garden? It is the Agony in the Garden. Gardens do not appear that often in Scripture, but they are very important. In spirituality, gardens are where lovers go. That is very important in getting to the drama of the Agony in the Garden. This is a drama inside of love. That is why in the beginning, where Scripture opens up, we are in the Garden of Eden. In the garden you can be naked, there is no shame in the garden.

What is happening in the garden is a test of love. In essence there are really three tests that tie together into one test in the Garden:

1. **Lose the Resentment:** The first test is: Can you give your life over in love without resentment and bitterness? Jesus has to give himself over to death, which is hard, which is suffering, which is sacrificial. He has to do it without resentment. He has to carry the cross and not send the bill. Jesus was going to die. His great gift was that He could give his life over without any bitterness, price tag, anger, or resentment, and with complete forgiveness. The Resurrection is all about forgiveness.
2. **Face Humiliation:** The second test Jesus has to face is that of a powerful humiliation of Good Friday. Consider what the risen Jesus tells the disciples on Easter Sunday in the morning on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). While the two disciples are walking away from Jerusalem, that is from the Church. It was their faith dream but also the place of humiliation, towards Emmaus, a spa; the disciples are going for some human consolation when they meet Jesus on the road, yet did not recognize Him. Why? Because they have written Him off, because they have seen Him humiliated. Then Jesus says to them "was it not necessary that the Christ should have to suffer and enter his glory?" What Jesus is saying to the disciples on the road to Emmaus is that you cannot get Easter Sunday if you do not get the humiliation of Good Friday. What suffering or humiliation does for us is that it gives us moral intelligence. You learn it from your own humiliation. Powerful sufferings have made you a deep person, it gives you character. We see this in the lives of the saints who suffered. They, like Jesus before them, allowed suffering to bring them to compassion; not bitterness. That is the test.
3. **Sacrifice for the Greater Good:** The third and final test: Can you give your life over and sacrifice today for something that is more long-range? To give your life over in trust for something long-range, where it is not to pay off today, is the opposite of despair, and is real hope. So many of our sins are sins of despair. If we are going to be faithful to anything, we must learn how to sweat blood, because that is what it is going to take. Jesus is our role model. He is the person we look up to when we suffer-for we know that we are not