

## Pursuing Spiritual Breakthrough Have Passion

There is a frightening aspect to this precept. To pursue passion is to pursue suffering. The word passion (*Greek, pathos*) means suffering. The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ begins with His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and it grows in intensity from there, reaching its climax in His death on the cross. Our passion should mirror that of our Lord's. Our passion must begin on our knees pleading with the Father that not our will but His be done. And like our Lord's passion, ours should continue to grow, ultimately ending in our death. For as St. Paul reminds us, "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his...But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Romans 6:5-8) And living with Him must be our passionate desire.

Jesus clearly explains in the parables what will be the cost of our passion for Him and His kingdom. He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:44-46) Each man in the parable sells all that he has in order to acquire the "kingdom of heaven." He sells ALL. That is a high cost. Surely the Lord wouldn't want us to sell or give away everything we have to be with Him. Or would He? To do so is to be "passionate" for Him—to suffer for Him.

But why should we desire suffering? Didn't the Lord come to free us from the snares of sin and death, from Satan and suffering? And in that is the paradox. Passion leads to freedom from suffering. Let me give you two temporal examples (remembering that the temporal reflects the spiritual). I have never personally experienced the pain of childbirth, but I have been an eyewitness to the event. They say that the closest a man can come to a comparable experience is passing a kidney stone. Childbirth is a painful experience. But Jesus Himself makes the comparison for us in John's Gospel. He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." (16:20-22) Pursuing spiritual breakthrough means persevering through earthly travail. But when we see that breakthrough, like the birth of a child, we no longer remember the anguish for joy has been birthed. The second example is surgery. Something needs to be removed from your body that is causing you to be ill or in pain. Surgery and the subsequent recovery are painful, but this is a necessary process so that healing and freedom from pain may follow. Sin and alienation from God needs to be excised from our lives—a spiritual surgery is required. It may be painful, but once we are delivered, the results will bring great joy.

Our passionate fervency for the Lord puts us at odds with the world. And in that there is pain. While the world rejoices, we may weep and lament. But if we persevere through the suffering as our Lord did in His Passion, we will experience resurrection and new life. And in that we become more open to the Holy Spirit and the desired spiritual breakthrough.