

The Mystery of Suffering

Hubert van Zeller

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The “weight of evil in the world seems overwhelming,” and it’s easy to lose hope in our ability to resist it, wrote Dom Hubert van Zeller (1905-1984), a Benedictine monk, sculptor, and the author of many books on Catholic spirituality. His 1963 classic, *The Mystery of Suffering*, reveals a God who doesn’t see the world as we do, but who “must still see the world as good or he would not allow it to continue its existence.” The life of faith becomes about “substituting the supernatural viewpoint for the natural.”

For Dom Hubert, life is a spiritual battle in which our pain, loneliness, and suffering must be met head on. Coming to terms with them, refusing to be governed by them, and learning how to deal with outward and inward frustration are hallmarks of spiritual maturity. “Once the soul has seen, however dimly, that there must be a point in having to undergo the adversity of the moment, and has surrendered to it, there is experienced a detachment which no amount of study or self-devised ascetic practice can bring about,” he wrote.

Calling the cross a signpost that marks the parting of the ways, Dom Hubert teaches that suffering can be redemptive and transformational. “So long as we have got love on our side,” he wrote, “we have the absolute assurance of God that we cannot be beaten.”

KRISTINE MORRIS (Spring 2016)

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