

GOD WITH US: DAY 17 JOY IN PAIN

A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come: but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. (John 16:21-22)

They should celebrate Mother's Day every month – maybe every day. Here's to you women who have allowed your bodies to be invaded and transformed for nine months while you grew and provided life support for a new human inside of you. Oh and not to mention the intense and painful process of birthing that rather large baby out into the world. And the selfless and sacrificial love that you give every day after to nurture and raise that human. God knows and understands the creative process and the deep bond of love, and He sees your efforts even when the rest of us overlook or under-appreciate them.

Jesus likened the relationship of joy and pain to the experience of childbirth. He knew that His disciples' grief would be intense following His death – but the joy of seeing Him again and understanding His miraculous victory over death would be even greater. He also knew that the pain we face in our lives can be so very real and intense. But He promises that the joy of our reunion with Him will be even more powerful and intensely joy-filled. We don't know when the reunion will come, but we can take heart - we can rejoice - that someday, whether through death or Christ's return, all our suffering, fear, grief, pain, and anguish will pale in comparison to the all-consuming love we experience in God's presence. For today, we can cling to the promise: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18). He is the God with Us who fills us with joy that overcomes all pain.

What troubles your heart as you seek and wait for Christ's joy? What does it mean for you to rejoice to actively express joy?