“PAIN. It seems to be the common denominator of our human existence. It’s part of the life experience. To avoid it is to detour the essence of life itself.” (Hansel, 1985)

 “Though I experienced death, I also experienced life in ways that I never thought possible before—not after the darkness, as we might suppose, but ***in*** the darkness. I did not go through pain and come out the other side; instead, I lived in it and found within that pain the grace to survive and eventually grow. I did not get over the loss of my loved ones; rather, I absorbed the loss into my life, like soil receives decaying matter, until it became a part of who I am. Sorrow took up permanent residence in my soul and enlarged it. I learned gradually that the deeper we plunge into suffering, the deeper we can enter into a new, and different life—a life no worse than before and sometimes better. A willingness to face the loss and to enter into the darkness is the first step we must take. Like all first steps, it is probably the most difficult and takes the most time (Sittser, 1996, p. 37).”

“Pain and suffering produce a fork in the road. It is not possible to remain unchanged. To let others or circumstances dictate your future is to have chosen. To allow the pain to corrode your spirit is to have chosen. And to be transformed into the image of Christ by these difficult and trying circumstances is to have chosen.” (Hansel, 1985, p. 97).

“Though suffering itself is universal, each experience of suffering is unique because each person who goes through it is unique. Who the self was before the loss, makes each person’s experience different from all others. That is why suffering loss is a solitary experience. That is also why each of us must ultimately face it alone. No one can deliver us, substitute for us, or mitigate the pain in us. “But loss does not have to isolate us or make us feel lonely. Though it is a solitary experience we must face alone, loss is also a common experience that can lead us to community. It can create a community of brokenness. We must enter the darkness of loss alone, but once there we will find others with whom we can share life together.” (Sittser, 1996, p. 154)

“The difference between shallow happiness and a deep, sustaining joy is sorrow. Happiness lives where sorrow is not. When sorrow arrives, happiness dies. It can’t stand pain. Joy, on the other hand, rises from sorrow and therefore can withstand all grief. Joy, by the grace of God, is the transfiguration of suffering into endurance, and of endurance into character, and of character into hope-and the hope that has become our joy does not (as happiness must for those who depend upon it) disappoint us.” (Wangerin, 1992, p. 31)

“The more we fight our pain and sorrow, the more tense we become and the more the pain is amplified. When we stop grasping for immediate solutions, relax into the present moment, and even lean into the pain, it has an opportunity to be diminished.” (Hansel, 1985)

“**Choice** is therefore the key. We can run from the darkness, or we can enter into the darkness and face the pain of loss. We can indulge ourselves in self-pity, or we can emphasize with others and embrace their pain as our own. We can run away from sorrow and drown it in addictions, or we can learn to live with sorrow. We can nurse wound of having been cheated in life, or we can be grateful and joyful, even though there seems to be little reason for it. We can return evil for evil, or we can overcome evil with good. It is this power to choose that adds dignity to our humanity and gives us the ability to transcend our circumstances, thus releasing us from living as mere victims. These choices are *never easy.* Though we can and must make them, we will make the, more often than not, only after much agony and struggle.” (Sister 1996, p. 37-38)

“Life is a journey, a journey about developing my soul. It is my choice whether I embrace the challenges and the pain on my journey and allow them to enlarge my soul; or I push them away and allow my soul to be diminished. The choice is always mine. For when I come to the end of my life, what I have done with my soul will be all that I have to lay at Jesus feet.” Phyllis Oswald Rogers, 1995