

Naval Aircrew training school seemed like the coolest thing. Compared to the denim bell bottoms and the white dixie cup hat, a flight suit, leather jacket, and a pair of shiny gold wings were a nice reward for a month-long class.

After all, I'd spent more than a year of studying Chinese. So how hard could four weeks be? And to get paid to exercise? And spend a month in Florida? That sounded like a dream-come-true.

For about a month or so before the transfer to Aircrew school, we would practice laps in a pool. And not being the greatest swimmer, I'd do the backstroke. I could backstroke all night. We'd swim for an hour or two and then dry off and grab something at the Enlisted Club.

Then came transfer orders, and the drive to Pensacola. Report for duty ... Bachelor Enlisted Quarters looked like a hotel – not like the barracks I'd just left behind.

And then “classes” started.

Every morning, we'd spend four hours running or doing the obstacle course or calisthenics. Every afternoon, we'd be in the pool. The first week was rough. The second week was aptly named “Hell week.” By this point, I was asking myself: “What did I get myself into?”

*“Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?”*

Things are not always what we expect.

James and John wanted to sit on Jesus' left and right hand. Or if they didn't want it, their mother sure did.

*“Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?”*

The prophet Jeremiah was told by God that he would be a “brass wall” and his mission would be to “root out and tear down” so that he could later “re-plant and build up.”

*“Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?”*

Only love can answer that question. Because the closer you draw to Jesus Christ, the closer you come to the cross.

And the closer you come to the cross, the closer you come to experiencing the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Love changes the pain of suffering into the joy of knowing God through Jesus Christ.

Our membership in Christ's mystical body is not just a clever poetic turn of phrase. It is a reality ... and sometimes it is a painful reality.

*“Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?”*

Only love can answer that question. Only supernatural love can persevere through the cross to the Paschal glory of Easter. Let us pray to know the love God in Christ through His cross on our Lenten journey. And as we draw nearer to the cross, let us receive the graces we need to persevere.