

## THE SAINTS AND SUFFERING

- I. A word regarding the Communion of Saints, in which we express belief in our Creed: It is a real and true bond of unity that exists between each member and Christ, and, as a consequence of our union with Him, our union with each other.
  - a. We form One Body in Christ; thus, there exists a communion of goods as well.
  - b. “As the Church is governed by one and the same Spirit, all the goods which she has received necessarily become a common fund.” CCC 947
  - c. “We are surrounded by so great of a cloud of witnesses...”(Heb 12:1) This cloud testifies to us of the love of Christ.
  - d. 1 Cor 12:26 “If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.” We are One body, thus sharing in the gifts of the Lord.
  - e. Hence, the prayers, sufferings, and examples of the Holy Saints are distributed and shared equally in the body.
- II. Christ invites each of us to live out a part of His Life on earth. To some, his private, family life. To others, His public life of preaching and teaching. To others, His priestly life of offering sacrifices. But to all, to pick up our crosses daily and follow him.
- III. These stories of sufferings are rare. Be careful not to assume that now you have heard these messages that God has prepared you to be a victim soul.
- IV. Victim Souls: Souls chosen by God to suffer for the sake of others.
- V. St. Therese the Little Flower:
  - a. She was weak and sickly by nature.
  - b. Became ill and dies of tb at the age of 24 in 1897.
  - c. Up until her death, she later revealed, that she had suffered a trial of faith that lasted until moments before her death. She died, however, in ecstasy.
  - d. Doctor of the Church because of her special love of suffering.
  - e. Constantly tempted to believe that there was nothing after death. Resorted to writing the Credo in her own blood.
  - f. Found no consolations or relief from these temptations against her faith until death.
  - g. She loved suffering because it was a proof of her love for God!
  - h. Theme: Her sufferings bear witness to the desire of our Lord to transform us into Divine Love—personal, living, real, and all-powerful!
- VI. Padre Pio of Pietrecina
  - a. Chosen by God to be a victim soul: Stigmata (1918), flagellation wounds on his back, attacks by the devil so fierce that his fellow friars were afraid to go into his room, as they had witnessed these attacks.
  - b. He worked miracles of all kinds: bi-location; speaking in tongues, namely, languages he never studied; reading of souls; never having a day off in 15 years, spending up to 18 hours a day in the confessional; there were times

when he was forbidden by his community from celebrating Mass due to rivalry or jealousy, or whatever.

- c. He was canonized in 2000.
  - d. He, too, had a sickness similar to St. Therese: an inflammation of the lungs, a pain so burning and fiery that it left him utterly incapacitated. Doctors report that his fever would sometimes climb to as high as 125 degrees!
  - e. This lung disease did eventually take his life.
  - f. But why? Let us have another saint answer the question for us:
- VII. St. Peter Julian Eymard: “One of the chief purposes of suffering, intended by our Lord who sends it, is to purify the soul so that, detached from earthly good and joys, it may give itself entirely to divine love. Suffering therefore brings on the blossoming of holiness.”
- VIII. Let us listen to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, an atheist Marxist, who, though his suffering in the gulag, led him back to Christianity. He says this,
- “The gulag became for me a prolonged period of mediation for my own responsibility for evil...I had become convinced, like Boris Kornfeld (a Jewish physician and convert to Christianity, whom he met while imprisoned) that there is no punishment that comes in life that is not deserved...it was granted to me to carry away from my prison years...how a human being becomes evil, and how good...and it was only when I lay rotting there on prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually, it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts. The line shifts and oscillates inside of us with the years. And even when the heart is overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains an uprooted small corner of evil.”

Thus, suffering purifies us, revealing to us the lessons of our own evil behavior, while also transforming us into Divine Love!

- IX. God never gives us a cross so heavy that we cannot bear it. And listen to the words of Jesus: Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, my burden is light.”
- a. Many saints experienced this fact at the moment of their martyrdom.
  - b. St. Lawrence: “Turn me over, I am done on this side.”
  - c. St. Maximilian Kolbe sang continuous songs of praise in the starvation bunker, teaching the Jewish inmates with him to do the same. He died with a smile on his lips.

- d. St. Ignatius of Antioch writing in his letters how he wanted to be chewed to bits so that, in this grinding by their teeth, he may be ground into the Eucharist!

X. Some thoughts to close:

- a. Blessed Marie of the Incarnation: “If we could, with a single, interior glance, see all of the mercy and goodness that exists in God’s designs for each one of us, even in what we call disgraces, pains, and afflictions, our happiness would consist in throwing ourselves into the arms of the Divine Will, with the abandon of a young child that throws himself into the arms of his mother. We would behave, in all things, with the intention of pleasing God and then we would maintain ourselves in a holy repose, fully convinced that God is our Father and that He desires our salvation more than we ourselves desire it.”
- b. “...after all, His Majesty will give you help proportionate to your trials, and so as you are suffering great trials, you will enjoy great favors, too!” St. Theresa of Avila.
- c. “Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of Redemption.” John Paul II