

One

Blessed are those who suffer for the sake of righteousness

How could suffering make us happy? Here are two good reasons:

First, suffering can be good for us because it *can* empty us of our pride, our self-reliance and our disordered loves, making room in our soul to be filled by God. Suffering can also increase our faith, hope, and love which increases our capacity to receive even more of God.

Second, our suffering can help others. Jesus is inviting us to help him save souls by our suffering. All we need to do is accept what we did not choose, do not like, and cannot change, and offer it up to Jesus.

Don't waste your suffering. Your soul and the souls of others are depending on you.

Two

What does it mean to offer it up?

In Colossians 1:24 St. Paul wrote, "It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church."

If the suffering of Christ is sufficient to save the world, why would Paul say he wants to make up all that still has to be undergone by Christ? Because God invites us to participate in his being and activity.

God invites us to share in His being through Baptism by which we receive a share in God's divine life and really become sons and

daughters of God. Because we share in His divine life we can take part in His activity.

The most important activity of God is saving souls. Jesus invites us to help Him save souls by doing what he did, accepting our crosses and offering them up in love.

This idea of participation is where we get the phrase “offer it up” and it is why Jesus says we cannot be his disciples unless we take up our own cross and follow him every day.

Three

To understand how we can help others by our suffering we must grasp one of the most fundamental and neglected ideas in Catholic theology, that of participation.

This is the idea that God has enabled us to share in His being and action in a way that does not add to, subtract from, or compete with His being and action.

In the material realm, “sharing” means dividing up limited resources. If you share your pizza with me, I’m subtracting from your pizza. And if we split a pizza, the more you take the less I’ll be able to have. There’s a competition. But sharing or participating in the spiritual realm isn’t like that. If I go to a lecture about something, the professor will share his knowledge with me, but I won’t be taking away or adding to or competing with any of his knowledge about the topic. My knowledge will depend on his, but his won’t depend on mine – so I’m participating in his knowledge in a way that doesn’t threaten his primacy or expertise.

What’s true of this example of teaching and learning is true of all the various ways God wills that we participate in His being and action.

Four

What kinds of things can we offer up for other people?

In the second apparition of the Angel to the three children of Fatima in the Summer of 1916, the Angel stated that the children had a mission from Jesus and Mary to help them save souls by prayer and sacrifice. Lucy asked the Angel, “How are we to make sacrifices?”

"Make of everything you can a sacrifice and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners."

Make of everything a sacrifice, a gift to be offered to God. Not just your crosses but your prayer, work, and your joy. Offer it to God at the beginning of each day by doing the Morning offering and renewing this throughout the day. Say, “Jesus, I do this or accept this for the love of you and for the good of souls.”

Five

Today I was meditating on the Fifth Station of the Cross – Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross

St. Jose Maria Escriva writes, “Jesus is exhausted. His footsteps become more and more unsteady, and the soldiers are in a hurry to be finished. So, when they are going out of the city through the Judgement Gate, they take hold of a man who was coming in from a farm, a man called Simon of Cyrene and they force him to carry the cross. In the whole context of the Passion, this help does not add up to very much. But for Jesus, a smile, a word, a gesture, a little bit of love is enough for him to pour out his grace bountifully on the soul of his friend... At times the

Cross appears without our looking for it: it is Christ who is seeking us out.”

Simon of Cyrene was one of the first who participated in the suffering of Jesus to save souls. But Simon, at first was forced to help him. We shouldn't need to be forced. We can choose freely to console the Heart of Jesus by accepting our cross for the love of Him and for the love of souls. By accepting our duties, responsibilities, trials, difficulties, contradictions, sicknesses, suffering, and our limitations, frailties, and defects for the love of him we console the Heart of Jesus.

Jesus remains on the Way of the Cross. Won't you console His heart by helping Him carry His Cross with Simon of Cyrene?