

## Faith in Five – Adults Suffering



1. Jesus' life was one of poverty, service, compassion and healing. "On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world," of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion" (CCC, 1505).
2. Jesus taught us that suffering is part of the demands of discipleship. "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). The cross is where we are shown in a perfect way how much God loves us. He loves us with a self-sacrificial, suffering love.
3. Spiritual discipline and training can be developed in times of illness and adversity. Scripture says, "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? . . . For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:7, 11).
4. God often permits these trials for our sanctification, as St. Paul himself learned when he prayed that God would remove from him an angel of Satan who was afflicting him: "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger [Greek: angelos] of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).
5. St. Paul understood suffering, finding joy in it and sharing this perspective with others. He saw suffering as:
  - a. a way to help others (Galatians 4:13). God used Paul's illness to bring salvation.
  - b. a way to be like Christ and for Christ's sake (Philippians 3:8-11).
  - c. a witness to others. St. Paul received yet gained something in return –(for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain)- Christ is forever honored.
  - d. a means to sanctification – when we are weak, we are strong. Through our weakness, our trust in God increases - God's grace is enough. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
  - e. a path to humility – let us rely on God (2 Corinthians 1:9).
6. In Romans 8:28, St. Paul tells us, "We know that in everything [suffering] God works for good with those who love him who are called according to his purpose". Suffering is not meaningless; it leads us to hope because of God's love for us. "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given

to us" (Romans 5:3-5).

7. "The Old Testament sometimes treats suffering as a form of punishment. But that punishment, Pope St. John Paul II insists, is not some form of sadistic divine retribution; rather, it is an opportunity for "rebuilding goodness in the subject who suffers." ([Source](#))
8. **Redemptive suffering** is unique only to Jesus Christ. By his sacrifice, we are redeemed from sin and death. "Suffering for His name's sake, is the suffering we are called to endure. Bishop Robert Barron says that redemptive suffering is putting up with suffering for doing what is right. This, he says, is acceptable in God's eyes". ([Source](#))
9. When we offer our suffering back to God, it becomes a gift of inestimable value; drawing down from heaven more grace than any other action we can possibly make. We offer daily sacrifices with joy and accepting with resignation God's Will in all things, that His mercy and grace pour forth. Such prayer enables one to elevate suffering beyond the natural, to a supernatural end, becoming a means of inestimable value ([Source](#)).
10. Our own suffering takes on a redemptive dimension when we unite it with the passion of Christ ([Source](#)). In his apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris* (1984), which deals with human suffering and redemption, Pope St. John Paul II described the relationship between the two realities: "The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed". Our experience in suffering may serve and help others who are suffering similarly.
11. St. Paul blesses God for His great mercy: "[God] ... comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction...For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer" (2 Corinthians 1:4-6).
12. The CCC 1505 states, "Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases." But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

As Pope St. John Paul II pointed out in the story of the Good Samaritan, he stopped not out of curiosity, but availability. Love is the fullest response to the meaning of suffering. We are called to address the suffering of others with love, practicing charity, solidarity and the practical alleviation of the pain of those in need. This is how we can be the face and hands of God when those around us suffer. "In that way, "the world of human suffering" summons forth "the world of human love." ([Source](#))

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