

Theory 5

REDEEMPTIVE SUFFERING AND THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING

CCC 1499 By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ.

“If we are children (of God) we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory” (Romans 8:17).

2 Corinthians 4:17 “The troubles which are soon over, though they weigh little, train us for the carrying of a weight of eternal glory which is out of proportion to them.”

Colossians 1:24 “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.”

Why does Jesus want us to participate in His suffering?

- Our suffering can be good for us
- Our suffering can be good for others

CCC 1500 Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death.

CCC 1501 Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him.

CCC 1505 During his lifetime, Jesus healed many who were sick.

But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. 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.

Jesus has transformed suffering and given it a two-fold meaning, that is why CCC 1505 ends with,

“By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering:

1. it can henceforth configure us to him
2. and unite us with his redemptive Passion.”

CCC 1506 Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross in their turn. (Matthew 10:38, “Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me.”) By following him they acquire a new outlook on illness and the sick.”

CCC 1508 reminds us that we should pray and do all we can medically to be healed:

“But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses. Thus St. Paul must learn from the Lord that “my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness,” (2 Corinthians 12:9) and that the sufferings to be endured can mean that “in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his Body, the Church.” (Colossians 1:24).

Cross-Reference CCC 618 speaks of our participation in Christ’s sacrifice:

The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ... “the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery’ is offered to all men. He calls his disciples to “take up their cross and follow [him],” for “Christ also suffered for [us] leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps.”

In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries. This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering. (cf. Mk 10:39, Col 1:24)

The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering

What do people need to know in the midst of suffering?

- God is all good, all knowing, and all powerful.
- Evil and suffering are not more powerful than God.
- Nothing can happen to you or a loved one that is beyond the power of God to turn it to the greatest good.
- We are not at the mercy of random, meaningless, senseless evil forces.
- God can orchestrate all things for our good if we trust and cooperate with him.

“We know that in everything God works for good for those who cooperate with him”
(Romans 8:28).

God allows suffering to happen to good people for two reasons:

1. To help us reach our full potential in Jesus
2. That we may help Jesus rescue souls and save the world from self-destruction

Our Suffering can help us reach our full potential

Hebrews 2:10 Jesus was made perfect through suffering and so shall we be made perfect through suffering.

Suffering *empties* our soul of disordered desires.

What have we grown attached to so that our happiness, security, and identity is found in these rather than in God? Our disordered attachments leave little or no room for God. Suffering strips, purifies, and empties the soul to make room for God to flow.

Suffering *enlarges* the capacity of the soul to receive more of God by increasing our faith, hope, and love.

Which takes more faith, hope, and love:

1. God giving you every worldly thing you want?
2. God withholding certain things you want?
3. God allowing suffering into your life while removing any feeling of His presence?

It is clear, by allowing suffering, difficulties, trials and dryness into our lives God is giving us the opportunity to exercise and grow in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, the very capacity to receive more of God's life and love in our soul.

Our Suffering can help Jesus rescue souls

Jesus said to Faustina: "There is but one price at which souls are bought and that is suffering united to My Suffering on the Cross" (Diary 324).

Jesus asked Faustina to help Him save souls by her suffering: "I desire that you make an offering of yourself for sinners and especially for those souls who have lost hope in God's mercy" (Diary 308). She then offered her life as a sacrifice for souls. (Diary 309)

Jesus said to her: "I am giving you a share in the redemption of mankind. You are solace in My dying hour" (Diary 310).

August 1934 - Mary, the Mother of God came to visit her. Mary looked at her with a warm smile and said, "*You are going to experience certain sufferings because of an illness and the doctors. You will also suffer much because of the image. But do not be afraid of anything.*"

The next day Faustina fell ill with tuberculosis. From that moment until the end of her life 4 years later, suffering was her constant companion.

Jesus also told Faustina: I need your suffering to rescue souls (Diary 1612)

Diary 1613 Almost all night I had such violent pains that it seemed all my intestines were torn to pieces. I threw up the medicine I had taken. When I bowed my head down to the ground, I lost consciousness and I stayed like that for some time, with my head on the floor. When I came to, I became aware that my whole body was pressing on my head and face, and that I was covered with vomit. I thought it would be the end of me...Jesus demanded suffering but not death. O my Jesus, do with me as You please. Only give me the strength to suffer. Since Your strength supports me, I shall bear everything. O souls, how I love you!

Diary 1645 March 25, 1938, Today, I saw the suffering Lord Jesus. He leaned down toward me and whispered softly, **My daughter, help Me to save sinners.** Suddenly, a burning desire to save souls entered my soul. When I recovered my senses, I knew just how I was to help souls, and I prepared myself for greater sufferings.

She could do this because you can do anything for the one you love. She loved Christ and she loved other souls.

Fatima

While the children were playing around the well near Lucia's house, suddenly the Angel appeared and asked: "What are you doing? Pray, pray very much! The Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifice constantly to the Most High. The hearts of Jesus and Mary have a mission for you"

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." "In this way, you will draw peace upon your country. I am its Guardian Angel, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission the sufferings which the Lord will send you."

August 19, 1917 Then, looking very sad, Our Lady said: "Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and pray for them."

To be the most spiritually fruitful you have to have the patient acceptance and endurance of the sufferings which you did not choose yet which God, in His mysterious providence, sends you.

What should we do in the midst of suffering?

Do what you can to change the situation

- Pray – ask God to remove our suffering or that of a loved one.
- Take Action – do whatever you can to remove your suffering or that of others.
- Penance and Reparation

What you did not choose, do not like, cannot change, and do not understand, accept and offer to Jesus and Mary as acts of faith, hope, and love to make up for all those who refuse to love God and for the conversion of others.

- Accept – accept with trust that which you cannot change.
- Offer – offer back to God your suffering by uniting it to the suffering of Jesus to help him rescue souls from hell and the world from self-destruction

Suffering is like the Sun and the Wind; it is always present, and its power can be harnessed or wasted.

Redemptive Suffering is like solar panels and windmills; it harnesses the power of suffering for your own good and the good of others.

The Anointing of the Sick

James 5:14 “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

CCC 1511 The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness, the Anointing of the Sick.

Who is this sacrament for?

- Any of the faithful in danger of death from sickness or old age
- Prior to a serious operation
- All who suffer from serious illness and infirmity

The effects of this sacrament

CCC 1520-1523

- Strength, peace, and courage to overcome difficulties of illness/frailties of old age
- Renewal of trust and faith in God
- Strengthens against temptations of the evil one, discouragement and anguish
- Leads to healing of the soul, and if it's God's will, healing of the body
- Forgiveness of sins
- Unites us more closely to Christ's Passion and His work of salvation
- Reception of the ecclesial grace received through the communion of saints and the Church praying for the sick
- Fortifies us for the final struggle before entering the Father's house

CCC 1523 The Anointing of the Sick completes our conformity to the death and Resurrection of Christ, just as Baptism began it. It completes the holy anointings that mark the whole Christian life: that of Baptism which sealed the new life in us, and that of Confirmation which strengthened us for the combat of this life.

Viaticum. CCC 1524 explains that in addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as viaticum. Communion in the body and blood of Christ, received at this moment of “passing over” to the Father has a particular importance. It is the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection...Jesus reassured us, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Additional resource in Toolbox: Process of Accepting Suffering & Offering It Up to God