

- Last Sunday I spoke about suffering, and how God so often allows suffering in our lives to purify us and make us holy.
- Suffering is the surgical scalpel that our Lord uses to cut away the cancerous effects of our sinfulness so that we might find true and lasting healing. Though painful, the sufferings God allows in our lives prepare us to enter the narrow gate of Heaven.
- Remember, Jesus tells us in the Gospels that many who try to enter the narrow gate of Heaven are not strong enough to do so (cf. Luke 13:24). Their fate is an eternity in hell – and from this fate our Lord so desperately wants to spare us.
- This is why the Letter to the Hebrews tells us not to disdain the discipline of the Lord (cf. Hebrews 12:5). While suffering is painful, the author of Hebrews tells us that it's actually the cause for joy, because "it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness (cf. Hebrews 12:11)."
- When we humbly accept the sufferings that come into our lives and unite them to Christ's suffering on the cross, we grow in grace – a grace that can transform our hearts and heal the wounds caused by our sinfulness.
- When we suffer in union with Christ, we become more like Christ Himself.
- Suffering, borne well, actually helps to restore the image of God within us that has been damaged and distorted by sin. Suffering, borne well, makes us holy.
- And so we must bear our trials and sufferings patiently. As we do, we are transformed and made able to enter through the narrow gate of Heaven.
- To this point, the great mystic St. Rose of Lima once wrote: "We cannot obtain grace unless we suffer afflictions. We must heap trouble upon trouble to attain a deep participation in the divine nature, the glory of the sons of God and perfect happiness of soul."
- She continues: "No one would complain about his cross or about troubles that may happen to him, if he would come to know the scales on which they are weighed when they are distributed to men."
- Those are hard words, but they're important if we're truly seeking holiness.
- So often when suffering comes into our lives, we immediately look for relief. We cringe and cry, sometimes wondering why God is punishing us, or we even become angry because we proudly think we shouldn't have to suffer or don't deserve to suffer.
- But what if we were to change our attitude toward suffering? What if we were to look upon our sufferings as a gift of grace?
- I bring all of this up because a great suffering is being visited upon this community. As of right now, unless Pope Leo intercedes, we'll lose the Latin Mass in our parish in just about a month's time.
- As we near the deadline when all of you will have to choose where and how to worship, my concern as your pastor is that we walk through this suffering well and in a manner that helps us become holy.
- Suffering is a powerful thing, capable of producing starkly different outcomes in a soul depending upon one's disposition toward it. Depending on our disposition, suffering can either make us angry, hard, and bitter; or it can make us holy.
- If we approach our sufferings with a proud anger, allowing ourselves to grow in resentment toward those causing our suffering, we're going to be miserable in this life, and we put ourselves in danger of being miserable in the next life.

- But if we take the approach of St. Rose of Lima (and really all the saints of the Church), we can find peace in the midst of our suffering and actually grow in authentic holiness.
- So, as we come to this sad moment in our parish's life, we need to pray for humility, for humility is the virtue that helps us handle our sufferings well.
- Indeed, St. Bernard once wrote that, "Humility is necessary not only for the acquisition of virtues, but even of salvation. For the Gate of Heaven, as Christ Himself testifies, is so narrow that it admits only little ones."
- In other words, there are no proud or big-headed people in Heaven, only the humble. If we wish to go to Heaven, this is a virtue we must practice. And like I just said, it's this virtue that enables us to handle our sufferings well – in a manner that leads to holiness.
- The beauty of humility is that it enables us to see our own faults and weaknesses, and how we fail God and are in constant need of His mercy. This, in turn, makes us more willing to put up with the sinfulness and weaknesses of others and extend them mercy.
- When we are humble, we are much more willing to forgive the slights and injustices committed against us because we're all too conscious of our sinfulness.
- In our Gospel today we're given the familiar story of the Good Samaritan. Our Christian tradition has always understood the Good Samaritan to be a symbol of Christ, while the man beaten and robbed is a symbol of sinful man – of our broken human condition.
- As the Good Samaritan, Christ rescues us from our fallen state, He bandages the wounds of our sins, being willing to minister to us even despite our uncleanness. Yet so often the remedy our Lord applies to our wounds is the ointment of suffering.
- The challenge is to have enough faith to see our sufferings in this life as the antidote to our sins, and our means for making reparation for them.
- As for our current situation with the Latin Mass, what should we do going forward so that we might humbly accept this suffering in a way that is spiritually profitable?
- First, we must all center ourselves in prayer, and then make an act of the will to accept humbly whatever suffering God allows with regard to the Latin Mass – trusting that what God allows is the best thing for our soul. We must have confidence in God's providence!
- While I personally have hope that the Latin Mass will one day be fully restored, we still have to deal with the here and now. Here and now we must accept that access to the Latin Mass is being greatly restricted.
- We must also continue praying for our pope and our bishop. And to be very direct, we need to ensure our attitude toward our bishop is all that it should be as members of his flock.
- What I can tell you about our bishop is that he is acting according to his conscience. Bishop Martin believes that what he's doing is in accord with the mind of the Church, and thus he feels duty-bound to carry out these changes.
- While we may not agree with the bishop, we must still treat him with respect and charity. He is the shepherd of our diocese, and we must pray for him, love him, and treat him well.
- If you want to write to him, instead of an angry letter, ensure him of your sincere prayers.
- Brothers and sisters, we have a difficult cross being laid upon our shoulders. But let's strive to see this suffering as a gift from God to make us more like Himself. Painful though it is, in faith we must believe that it is a gift of grace from our loving Father.
- May we have the faith to see this suffering and all suffering as the gift it is, and may we be courageous in embracing our sufferings so as to gain the graces that come from it.
- May we all grow in holiness through our sufferings. St. Rose of Lima, pray for us.