

- Shortly after World War II, a Jewish psychiatrist from Vienna by the name of Viktor Frankl wrote the book: *Man's Search for Meaning*. Writing this book was a means for Frankl to mentally process the terrible ordeal he suffered over his 3 years in concentration camps.
- Frankl and his family were deported in 1942, and in the concentration camps he lost his parents, his brother, and most sadly, his pregnant wife.
- Yet despite this incredible cross, Frankl didn't become bitter; he did not lose hope.
- As a psychiatrist he observed that those who were able to find some meaning in their suffering were the ones most able to endure and most likely to survive the horrors of the concentration camps.
- In his book, first published in 1946, Frankl argues that when we unite our suffering to a noble purpose, it frees us from self-centeredness and transforms us. It makes us better, holier.
- For the past week, we've been focusing our hearts and minds on the suffering and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Incapable of suffering as God, our Lord chose to become a man capable of suffering. God became man so that He could suffer and die for our sins.
- God's taking on of our human flesh and human nature so that He could freely suffer for us is the grandest act of humility ever conceived, and the most heroic and incomparable act of love the world has ever known.
- As we heard from St. Paul last week on Palm Sunday: "Christ Jesus, though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness."
- "Found human in appearance, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." And all of this we have beheld these past few days in our liturgies.
- And what we learn today as we stand beyond the crucifying horror of Calvary and behold our Lord's empty tomb is that the embrace of the cross leads to freedom.
- When we find the grace to face our crosses, our sufferings – whatever they may be – and embrace them, choosing to unite our sufferings with those of Christ, we experience a resurrection, a freedom from the constraints that keep us tied to this world.
- Addicted to comfort and ease as so many of us are, we are conditioned in our society today to flee suffering at all costs. Yet, the search for an easy life and the habitual embrace of comfort produce no lasting good fruit of virtue within us, but only fleeting personal pleasure.
- We are not made stronger, holier, or more virtuous through constant comfort. Rather, we become weaker, more selfish, and we fetter ourselves to the mammon of this world.
- And in binding ourselves to the comforts of this world, we lose sight of the eternal comfort enjoyed by the elect in Heaven, while the fires of faith, hope, and charity meant to be burning brightly within us are cooled, if not extinguished altogether.
- Of course, this doesn't mean we should forego all comforts. The good things of this world are signs of God's love and goodness. They provide much needed rest and consolation. But they must be enjoyed prudently and with temperance – and not made into golden calves.
- As well, it's not necessary for us to go in search of sufferings and crosses. In His providence, God allows crosses to appear in our lives as He sees fit. He permits suffering to befall us, but only so that He can draw some great good out of it.

- So, when suffering comes and we're faced with climbing our own personal Calvary, we mustn't shy away in fear; we mustn't reject the cross in pride or anger. Following the example our Lord set for us, we must humbly embrace it and carry it.
- And as we embrace our crosses and unite them with Christ's suffering on Calvary, we must do so with faith that God will bring some good out of our pain, with hope that our crosses will help prepare us for Heaven, and with burning love for God and His infinite wisdom.
- Brothers and sisters, on this Easter day we glory in our Lord's great victory over sin and even death itself. If ever there's a day to celebrate and give thanks, it's today. For through our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection, the gates of Heaven have been opened to us.
- Our salvation has been made possible!
- But let us never forget that our redemption was won through our Lord's embrace of the cross. And as His faithful followers striving to be like Him in every way, we too – from time to time – must embrace and carry our crosses.
- May we do so with the sure and certain knowledge that the embrace of the cross leads to freedom: freedom from our selfishness, freedom from fear, freedom from a worldly mindset that keeps us tethered to this life and unable to hope in eternal life.
- Incapable of suffering as God, God became man to suffer and die so that mankind could become like Him and enjoy eternal life where there is no suffering. May we always be strong in the faith, hope, and charity necessary to live for the God who died for us.
- A blessed and happy Easter to you all!