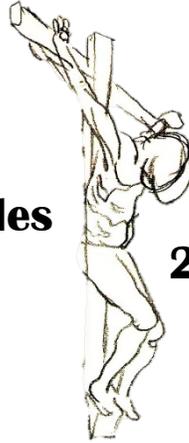


Our Lady of Lourdes



2nd Corinthians

Comfort for the Afflicted (#1)

The Church scattered across the world carefully guards...this preaching...and this faith, since she inhabits as it were, one single house and in her faith is like those who, so to say, have one soul and one heart; she preaches, teaches and hands on her tradition in unison as if with a single mouth. For although different languages exist in the world, the force of tradition is still one and the same...just as the sun, God's creature, is one and the same in the whole world, in like manner the light, the preaching of the truth, also shines everywhere and illuminates all those who wish to come to the knowledge of the truth.¹

~St. Irenaeus~

*Why is the universal nature of the Church (its unity across time and space) important? Are there other important principles that operate in tension with universality?
How can individuality flourish within a truth that is fixed?*

If you look upon sacrifice and suffering only through the eyes of reason alone, your tendency will be to avoid as much of it as you can, for pain in itself is never pleasant. But if you can learn to see the role of pain and suffering in relation to God's redemptive plan for the universe and each individual soul, your attitude must change.²

~Father Walter Ciszek~

Can you think of an example of a suffering that bonds people together?

It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ~Romans 8:16-17~

¹¹ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*, I, 10, 2. Quoted in Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1996. Pg. 87

² Walter Ciszek, *He Leadeth Me*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1995. Pg. 119

*Modern Christians commonly think that suffering in their lives somehow signals that God is displeased with them, how does this idea square with Paul's message?
Imagine a life without suffering – in earthly reality, does this really produce happiness?*

Our Lord and Savior lifted up his voice and said with incomparable majesty: “Let all men know that grace comes after tribulation. Let them know that without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase. Let men take care not to stray or to be deceived. This is the only true ladder to paradise, and without the cross, there is no other way in which to ascend to heaven. No one would complain about his cross or about the troubles that may happen to him, if he would come to know the scales on which the crosses are weighed when they are distributed to men.”³

~From the writings of St. Rose of Lima~

Without saying that suffering is a good thing in itself, can we say that suffering helps us? If so, how have you seen it?

In Paul's time, being marked with a seal was a sign of ownership for animals and slaves and of identity for devotees for a cultus (cf. the “mark of the Beast, Satan” in Rev. 19:20). The seal not only signified ownership or identity, but also guaranteed safekeeping. Paul declares that believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit.⁴

~J. Paul Sampley~

This sign with which you are now marked, is the sign that you are from now on marked as a sheep of Christ. For a sheep, as soon as it is bought, receives the mark by which its owner may be known; and also it feeds in the same pasture and is in the same sheepfold as the other sheep who bear the same mark, show in that they all belong to the same master.⁵

~Theodore of Mopsuestia~

Paul can speak of the present gift of the spirit as the *arrabon*, the “down payment”, the foretaste of what is to come, the signpost towards the final goal.⁶

~N.T. Wright~

³ St. Rose of Lima, *Letter to a doctor at Castille*, Liturgy of the Hours Vol. IV, Catholic Book publishing Co, New York 1975. Pg. 1342

⁴ J Paul Sampley *2nd Corinthians* in: *The New Interpreters Bible Vol. XI*. Abingdon Press, Nashville 2000. Pg. 51

⁵ Theodore of Mopsuestia quoted in Jean Danielou *The Bible and the Liturgy* University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN 1956. Pg. 56

⁶ N.T. Wright *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2013. Pg. 1094