

- No doubt some of you have been following the story this week of the Catholic high school kids from Covington, KY, who were at first accused of taunting a Native American man after last week's Pro-Life March in Washington, DC.
- Video clips showed a smiling, white teenaged boy in a "Make America Great Again" ballcap standing toe to toe with the Native American.
- Media outlets, talking heads, and celebrities all rushed to judgment with pharisaical outrage to condemn this young man and his classmates for their supposed intolerance. Social media accounts were weaponized to assault these kids with the bombs of malice and slander.
- Yet once a longer video clip that showed more of what really happened was released, it was shown that the Catholic high school kids were actually being taunted a provocative group known as the Black Hebrew Israelites.
- As for the Native American, it turns out he was the one who instigated the confrontational stance with the high school kid.
- What started out as a hateful media storm against these Catholic school kids has turned into a litany of public apologies from those who failed to check all the facts and get the story right.
- Of course, this story raises the questions of media bias, the political polarization of our country, and how quick to judgment we can be in our deeply-divided society.
- Yet in a larger sense, I think this sad story should lead us to reflect a little more deeply on our expectations. What do we expect from others? Do we expect the best of others and give them the benefit of any doubt we might have?
- Do we expect them to see this world as we do and hold our same values? Do we write off others in judgment when they don't, or if we see something in them that we don't like?
- Of course, any consideration we give to our expectations of others should also include our expectations of God. While we should primarily be concerned with what God expects of us, it is good to examine our expectations of Him as well, for our expectations of God affect our spiritual life.
- For example, do we expect God to be good to us? Do we have full confidence in Him? Are we willing to give God the benefit of the doubt when things don't work for us as we want?
- Sometimes people lose their faith in God and write Him off when bad things happen, as if they expected God to prevent their suffering. We ask ourselves: if God is so good, why does He allow bad things to happen?
- This happened in my own life. 20 some years ago, before I was a priest, some terrible sufferings entered into my life that I simply couldn't make sense of. In my immaturity at that time, I was angry with God for not preventing it.
- In fact, I got so angry that, while I still attended Mass every Sunday, for 4 months I didn't go to the Sacraments. I had certain expectations of God that He failed to meet. In fact, I felt somewhat abandoned by God.
- Fortunately, God's grace was not lacking in my life, and I was eventually able to see both my own immaturity and arrogance in thinking that God should do things my way, and I returned to fully practicing my Faith.
- That embarrassing episode of my life taught me quite a lot about God, about faith, and the expectations we have in this life.

- Naturally, the question of how to accept suffering from the hands of a God Whom we believe to be Goodness Itself is difficult because it involves the mystery of sin and evil.
- Sadly, most suffering is caused by the sins of others. Certainly, God is not going to revoke the gift of free will that He's given to all of us, even when we use our free will to hurt others.
- God the Father didn't even stop the suffering of His only begotten Son, who was arrested, tormented, mocked, and executed unjustly.
- God allows men, even the worst of men, to retain their free will – for it's that capacity to choose that makes us capable of loving. It's what makes us human. If God were to curb our free will, we would forfeit our unique human dignity.
- So what about suffering that comes into our lives that's not caused by the sins of others, like sickness or natural disasters? Why does God allow that?
- He allows it only to bring a greater good from it. If suffering comes our way, it means that God has a plan to make us a better person and to bring greater graces into our life.
- Remember, as the Gospel of Luke tells us today, Christ has come to proclaim good news! In Him is the consolation for every suffering, the healing of every illness, the freedom from everything that holds us bound. But we must have faith in Him!
- Think of the Centurion in Matthew's Gospel, who approached Jesus to ask Him to heal a servant. Now this man wasn't even a Jew; he was a Roman soldier. He had no reason to believe in Jesus, and yet his faith was such that we recall it at every Mass.
- "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word..."
- Faith is important firstly because it glorifies God. It's a gift given to us at our baptism that God expects us to use to glorify and serve Him. But our faith also helps us look beyond unpleasant circumstances and suffering so that we might still believe in God's goodness.
- Our faith in God should not be in some belief that He will do all that we ask, or that He'll give us a perfect life and keep us free from suffering.
- Our faith in God should be all-encompassing. It should be centered on God's saving grace, i.e., on the knowledge that He'll give us every grace we need to be saved on the last day. That's the proper object of faith.
- Moreover, both Scripture and the Saints are clear that suffering, in whatever form it comes, is ultimately a gift from God – if we are willing to trust faithfully in God's goodness.
- Suffering humbles us and induces us to draw closer to our Lord; it gives us a chance to make reparation for sin and to imitate Christ. It corrects our faults, reproves our improprieties, strengthens us in virtue, and prepares our souls for the glories of Heaven.
- As St. Ignatius of Loyola once said, "If God causes you to suffer much, it's a sign that He has great designs for you, and that He certainly intends to make you a saint."
- My brothers and sisters, what do you expect of God? As Christians we are called to believe that Christ came to bring us good news! He is a God of love, yet out of His love for us, He sometimes allows us to suffer so that we might grow in greater holiness.
- May we each commit to being more faithful to God, trusting that whatever sufferings we endure in this life are for our eternal good, and in this way be confident in our expectation that He'll grant us eternal life.