

- As you might imagine, being a pastor necessarily means coming into contact with a lot of suffering. And I have often marveled at the amount and the severity of the suffering that some people have to cope with.
- While the world has always had suffering, it certainly seems like the past 27 months since the pandemic began have been filled with more suffering than usual. So many of us have had our lives drastically altered in these past 27 months.
- Yet, as our world slowly gets back to some sense of normalcy, I hope we don't forget the experience of suffering we've had, for suffering is one of life's greatest teachers.
- Of course, coming to terms with suffering is one of the most difficult things we ever have to do in this life. This is especially the case when we have a sense of injustice in our sufferings – the sense that we don't deserve the particular suffering that's been visited upon us.
- Often, we have a difficult time reconciling our belief that God is a loving and good Father with the fact that, despite His goodness, God often permits us to suffer – and many times because of the malice, inconsideration, or downright stupidity of others.
- When we suffer something terrible or difficult that's not the direct result of something we did wrong, we can easily wonder why a *good* God would allow this to happen.
- Yet when we seriously question God's goodness when faced with suffering, it's generally because we lack the faith to believe fully and completely in God's goodness, or because in our pride and self-centeredness, we cannot imagine that *we* must suffer.
- It is a common trait of fallen man that we often overestimate our own goodness, believing that we don't ever deserve to suffer, while at the same time underestimating God's goodness, His wisdom, and His power.
- Believing that man is the measure of all things, we often fail to see the "big picture" of the great drama of salvation in which we are all caught up, and in this failure we get angry with God for allowing some suffering to befall us, when in fact, our suffering is all part of God's plan for our personal salvation!
- Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, a time for us to consider our one, holy God in His 3 co-equal, co-eternal persons.
- While last Sunday with the great feast of Pentecost we focused on the Holy Spirit, and while next Sunday as we celebrate Corpus Christi we will focus on Jesus Christ our Eucharistic Lord, today's feast gives us a chance to focus on God the Father, the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the Trinity.
- The Father is spoken of as the Creator, and is Whom we are usually referring to when we say "God." The Father is the source from Whom everything comes to us, and to Whom our worship is ultimately directed.
- And yet, while we are created to worship God, we are often very quick to complain to Him when things don't go as *we* plan. This is because, in our pride and self-centeredness, we so often fail to see His providential hand in all that happens in this world.
- We often fail to remember that "all things work to the good of those who love God" (Rom 8:28), which is another way of saying that God can draw something good, something beneficial, out of anything, no matter how evil we may judge it to be.
- Indeed, while God never directly wills that man commit evil, He often permits us to commit evil because, from all eternity, He has known the good He wishes to draw out of it.

- If we wish to understand more deeply how God brings good out of suffering, and that He allows suffering to befall us precisely because He loves us, we need only look at the calamity of Calvary.
- God the Father did not stop or prevent the passion of His only-begotten Son, although He certainly could have. He allowed it to happen. Yet God allowed Christ's terrible suffering and death for a most important reason: so that we sinful men could be redeemed!
- Thus, we can see that just because God allows us to suffer something terrible in life is by no means a sign of disfavor or a lack of love on His part, for He allowed His only-begotten Son to suffer unspeakably.
- To the contrary, the saints teach us that suffering is generally a sign of God's election, a sign that God does love us.
- Moreover, suffering is often the means by which God the Father brings about the greatest graces in our lives. Suffering is never in vain, if we just behold it with the eyes of faith.
- Our first reading today from the Book of Wisdom speaks to us of the wisdom of the God. For keep in mind that God is not simply wise. God is Wisdom itself! He alone sees the world with its human history as it truly is.
- Because God is wisdom, we can trust that even the sufferings that befall us are for our good.
- It's why we can "boast of our afflictions" as St. Paul says in his Letter to the Romans today, "knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance proven character, and proven character, hope."
- If we come to know and understand all that our Catholic Faith teaches us to believe about God the Father: that He is omniscient and omnipotent, that He is not merely good, or wise, or merciful, but is Himself goodness, wisdom, and mercy, then we can come to believe that nothing falls outside of the realm of Providence, and all that happens to us is for our good.
- In fact, God uses evil in such an outstanding way that the result is much better than if the evil had never existed in the first place. This is why we call the original sin of our first parents the *felix culpa*, the "happy fault of Adam", which won for us so glorious a redeemer.
- While God did not directly will Adam and Eve to commit the original sin, that sin became the impetus for the Father to send us His only begotten Son, Who alone could pay man's debt to His justice.
- While there are many people in this world who consciously try to work against God by committing evil, His power, goodness, and wisdom are such that He uses their evil acts to bring about His will. In other words, you cannot overpower God and you cannot outwit God.
- While never wants anyone to sin or to commit evil, He allows it so that He might show forth His power, goodness, and wisdom. We need only have eyes of faith to see it.
- Brothers and sisters, suffering is not something that we can ever fully avoid in this life. To be frank, it's absolutely necessary that we suffer if we wish to go to Heaven.
- And if we don't suffer enough in this life, then we'll have to suffer in the next so that we might be purified of our sins and made ready to be united to God for all eternity.
- So as crosses are laid upon our backs – no matter what form they take – may we receive them with faith in God's goodness, power, and wisdom, trusting that He has allowed our particular suffering precisely for our salvation.