

- In the aftermath of this past Monday’s terrible police shooting, I was called to go CMC-Main to be an extra chaplain on hand for the victims. It was a sad scene – one that can truly be reconciled in our minds only within a Christian understanding of sin and redemption.
- Four men, all dads with young kids, were killed in the line of duty; 4 others were wounded.
- As I’ve prayed for the repose of these men’s souls, I’ve also prayed for their families: that they be able to handle their suffering and pain as Christians, with faith, hope, and charity.
- Suffering comes to all of us at times, and so often when serious suffering is visited upon us, it feels like an ambush – perhaps much like what these slain men and their colleagues encountered on Monday afternoon.
- In those moments of pain and confusion, indifference is not an option. We have to make a choice: either to lean in to the cross and accept it with trust in God’s providence, or to reject the cross and allow anger and bitterness to take root in our hearts.
- When a large cross of suffering is presented to us, we must choose: either to grow in virtue, or to surrender to vice; either to soften our hearts or to harden them; either to live up to our Christian dignity, or to surrender that dignity.
- Very beautifully, when we are baptized, we receive the 3 theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. They are infused within our souls – given to us as gifts from our Lord so that we might live up to our Christian dignity.
- God instills these virtues into our souls precisely to enable us to behave as His children and become worthy of eternal life, so that we might live as He wants us to live.
- Of course, when God gives a gift, He expects a return on His investment. And so, as Christians, we are called to practice these virtues of faith, hope, and charity throughout our lives, allowing them to grow stronger within us so that we might come become like Christ.
- And it is in moments of suffering that these virtues are tested. Yet, more than any other time, it’s in the moments of crisis and pain that we must really practice these virtues. And the first of the three theological virtues we must practice is hope.
- You see, hope is the virtue that makes the Christian crave the Kingdom of God. The virtue of hope stirs us to desire eternal life as our final happiness.
- It draws us to place our trust in the promises of Jesus Christ, relying on the grace and help of the Holy Spirit to achieve this final goal of complete union with God Himself. Hope makes us desire union with the Holy Trinity.
- Hope often seems to take a backseat to her more popular sister virtues. Yet in his epic poem *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*, Charles Peguy describes hope as an impish little girl pulling her older, more mature and matronly sisters, faith and charity, along by the hands.
- While it is true that faith may move mountains and charity is the perfection of all the virtues, it is hope that keeps us moving along in the Christian journey when faith and charity tire.
- It is hope that leads the way because it is hope that keeps man from discouragement, and this is why we must turn first to hope in times of suffering. It is hope that picks us up and keeps us focused on God and His promises.
- As for charity, St. James tells us in the epistle today, we must be “doers of the word and not hearers only,” for if we only hear the word of God and do not put it into practice in our lives, we deceive ourselves.

- St. James' point in our epistle is that the practice of our Catholic faith requires something of us. It's not enough just to come to Mass and hear the Word of God proclaimed, and to behold the great mystery of the Eucharist and partake of it.
- Practicing our Faith requires that we actually try to be virtuous, and in this particular passage of Scripture, St. James is encouraging us to practice the virtue of charity.
- As he says, "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world."
- In the Semitic culture of the time, orphans and widows were considered the prime examples of those who are defenseless and oppressed, and thus to St. James, caring for them in their need is a prime way to exercise the virtue of charity.
- But in addition to hoping for Heaven and practicing charity, we mustn't neglect the other theological virtue of faith. And this is where we turn to today's Gospel.
- Today our Lord tells us, "If you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked any thing in My Name: Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."
- Here, Jesus is inviting us to have faith in Him; He's inviting us to put aside whatever doubts we might have and believe fully in His goodness and love.
- Frankly, this Gospel should test us a bit. Do we have the type of faith that can move mountains? Do we really trust Christ and believe that He is good enough to answer even our most impossible prayers?
- The truth of the matter is that the more we expect of Jesus in faith, the more He gives to us. If we, in our minds and hearts, place no limits on His merciful love, we'll discover that Christ's love for us has no limits.
- Jesus' love for us is so deep and tender, my brothers and sisters, that He wants us to trust Him even with the most insignificant things in our life. We just have to have faith strong enough to believe this.
- So how do we strengthen our faith, hope, and charity so that we might hope for Heaven as we should, love God and neighbor as we should, and have faith in Christ as we should? It happens in our prayer, most especially before the Blessed Sacrament.
- It's in adoring Christ, present for us in the Eucharist, that our faith in Him grows, our hope for eternal union with Him grows, and our love for Him and one another grows. Indeed, these things grow in proportion to the time we give our Lord in prayer.
- For all the marvelous graces we receive in the Sacraments, we still need to pray if we are to become the Christians our Lord desires us to be.
- In particular, if you can make the time to come to adoration, which we have every Tuesday from 8 a.m. until Wednesday at 5 p.m., you'll find your relationship with our Lord becoming deeper, richer, and more intimate. You'll find yourself becoming a better person.
- And you'll find in your prayer, especially in Adoration, all the strength you need to carry whatever crosses God allows in your life.
- For it's in adoration – where we can see Him plainly before us in the Eucharistic Host – that Jesus reveals Himself to us and draws us closer to Himself. It's in silent adoration that we develop the capacity to listen to our Lord, and the trust to be obedient to what He asks of us.
- Our Lord has entrusted to each of us the virtues of faith, hope, and charity to make us more like Himself. Through our fervent prayer, especially in Adoration, may we each be strengthened in these virtues so that we may carry all of our crosses courageously.