

“JESUS SUFFERING FOR US”

John 18: 28 – 19:7

There is a group in the Catholic Church called the Apostolate of the Suffering. It was founded by Giacomo Gaglione. In June 1916, at the age of sixteen, he contracted a disease which immobilized him in bed with paralyzed legs. All the treatments that were tried, including surgery and electrotherapy, were useless. In 1919 he went to a Capuchin mystic, Padre Pio seeking to be cured. Instead the monk convinced him to accept his affliction as a mission from Christ.

In August 1929, after 19 years of paralysis he went to Lourdes hoping to be cured. This was the first of nine pilgrimages to Lourdes. He did not find a cure but there he founded the Apostolate of Suffering, a spiritual brotherhood whose purpose is to convince the sick that they are loved by the Lord. He wrote three books *The Pilgrimage of a Soul*, *In the Mirror of my Soul*, and *50 years of the Cross to be able to smile*.

A co-founder of the Apostolate of the Suffering was Luigi Novarese who, afflicted himself, built several homes for those were ill and disabled. Both of these men were named saints after their deaths.

There is much Catholic teaching associated with this brotherhood that we couldn't accept. However, the basic concept we should accept – that God calls some Christians to experience suffering for His purposes. We can bring honor and glory to Christ by offering our humble acceptance of suffering He sends us as our sacrifice of love to Him.

And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. (John 9:2-3 NKJV)

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, (Colossians 1:24 NKJV)

1.) Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not!" One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

(John 18:25-27 NKJV)

The sufferings and humiliation of Jesus began the same night as the Last Supper. Following His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas Iscariot led a Jewish detachment of troops, their captain, and officers to where Jesus was. There they bound Him and arrested Him. At that point, all of Jesus' disciples except Judas, John, and Peter fled to safety and locked themselves in the upper room for fear of the Jews. John and Peter followed Jesus. John was known by the servants at the high priest's house and they let him follow Jesus. Peter was not known by them and John had to come back to the gate and ask them to allow Peter into the courtyard.

Suffering and humiliation are hard to bear. They are made even harder when we have to face them alone. In Genesis Joseph was taken into Egypt and sold into slavery. He was unjustly accused and put into prison. There was no friend, no family to stand with him. In the New Testament, when the Apostle Paul was taken before the court in Rome, he wrote, "I had no one to stand beside me at my first hearing."

After some hours in the courtyard, Peter was asked three times if he was a follower of Jesus. Three times Peter denied that he was a disciple of the Christ. Peter is the one Jesus had appointed as leader of the disciples. When asked, he denied Jesus, the last time with a curse. The third time, as Jesus was being led away, He looked at Peter. Peter fled and on the third day he was found with the other disciples cowering behind a locked door in the upper room. Peter wept with shame while Jesus wept in pain. When you sing "Where He Leads Me I Will Follow" remember the costs.

2.) Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you." Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die. (John 18:28-32 NKJV)

Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all. But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" Then they all cried again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. (John 18:38-40 NKJV)

Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." (John 19:6-7 NKJV)

In these three passages we see another aspect of the sufferings and humiliation Jesus endured for our sakes. His own people rejected Him.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: (John 1:11-12 NKJV)

Often in the Muslim world, if a Muslim becomes a Christian, he/she is rejected by their family and the community.

It is hard to understand how Jesus Christ who had been hailed by a large crowd just one week before, about whom they shouted, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." could a week later be the object of hatred and scorn and have a large crowd crying out "Crucify Him."

But this hatred was no surprise to Jesus. Still, knowing and expecting it did not make it any less painful to bear.

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. (John 15:18 NKJV)
"He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'" (John 15:23-25 NKJV)

3.) And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?" (John 18:22-23 NKJV)

So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands. Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him." Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!" (John 19:1-5 NKJV)

Imagine that you are being beat up by the neighborhood bully. Then your older brother steps in to help you. Sadly, your older brother gets trounced by the bully. He goes back to the house bleeding and bruised. That isn't exactly what happened to Jesus. However, Jesus took a terrific beating on our behalf. While soldiers were pummeling Him, while the scourge was opening bloody stripes on His back, while the thorns pierced His brow and caused blood to drip down His face – it was my sins and your sins that were the causes of His suffering.

“Ah, holy Jesus, how hast Thou offended,
That man to judge You
hath in hate pretended? By foes derided,
by Thine own rejected,
O most afflicted!

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon Thee?
Alas my treason,
Jesus hath undone Thee! 'Twas I, Lord Jesus,
I it was denied Thee:
I crucified Thee.

For me, kind Jesus, was the Incarnation,
Thy mortal sorrow,
And Thy life's oblation;
Thy death of anguish and Thy bitter passion,
For my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay Thee,
I do adore Thee,
And will ever pray Thee,
Think on Thy pity and Thy love unswerving,
Not my deserving.” *Johann Herrmann, circa 1630*

Jesus suffered for you and me in being rejected by His own people who had cherished God's promise of a Messiah, but then refused the Savior God sent. Jesus' own disciples abandoned Him in His hours of trial. The sufferings of Jesus climaxed in severe physical punishment.