

**"SUFFERING AND THE MYSTERY OF LOVE"**

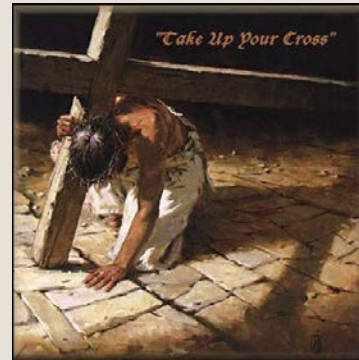
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Dear Family in the Two Hearts:

Saint Paul, the apostle, in his Letter to the Colossians tells us "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (Col 1, 24). With these particular words, it seems that Saint Paul wanted to reveal to us a very powerful mystery, a treasure of great value which he, himself, had already found: the meaning and the redemptive power of suffering. Even though this had been for St. Paul a personal discovery, he invites all of us to also discover this hidden treasure. To discover it means opening ourselves to a powerful grace of love, of fruitfulness, and of an inconceivable participation in God's designs of redemption for mankind and for the entire world.



The Servant of God, John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Salvificis Doloris*, tells us that suffering "seems to be, and actually is, almost inseparable from man's earthly existence." Suffering is a mystery, an inherent reality to our human condition. Suffering occurs at diverse moments in our lives; it is carried out in different ways, it comes in different shapes: however, one way or another, it accompanies the life of man here on earth in its double dimension: both spiritually and corporally.

The Holy Father, through this Letter has reminded us that Christ's Redemption, the price of His Passion and His death on the cross, is a decisive and definite event in the history of humanity. Not only because God's divine designs of justice and mercy were accomplished—taking upon Himself our sins and paying for them, while at the same time obtaining for us salvation— but also, because the suffering of the God-made-man, reveals to mankind a new meaning of suffering.

This is a new significance, which the human heart has so ardently desired to understand, since suffering has accompanied man throughout all of history and throughout all lands. And, it is precisely on the cross of Christ alone, that man is able to find its most eloquent significance: that God is love and that God loves us. The cross, therefore, is a sign and a mysterious expression of His love.

Oh, what mystery lies in suffering, a mystery which flows precisely in the power of the Cross! It is a mystery which is only accessible to those who open their hearts to contemplate the deepest realities of love, of authentic love that is freely given on the Cross. Love that is pierced to give so much life.

Just as Saint Paul says: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1, 22).

What a mystery! For some, the cross is an outrage, in other words, a stumbling block; for others, foolishness—meaning: nonsense; for many, it is seen as a weakness; for others, it is an evil which must be avoided at all costs..... for some, it will mean the falling and rising of so many; fulfilling Simeon's prophecy, when he presented the Child Jesus in the Temple: and said to his mother, Mary, "This child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2, 33-35).

For those who are simple of heart, those who lift up their hearts beyond their expectations and their worldly yearnings, and for those who allow themselves to be enlighten in their limited understanding by the Holy Spirit with the light of spiritual intelligence, the cross, [the embracing of suffering for love and in union with Christ is God's strength, God's wisdom, it is the powerful expression of the potency of love, and of love to the extreme.

At the announcement of the suffering of the Messiah which Simeon prophesied would be the falling and rising of so many, the Blessed Mother, who "kept all these things in her heart", understood that the salvific mission of her Son, would take place in the context of suffering and opposition... that his love would be for many hearts a sign of contradiction.

This annunciation, this second annunciation, was for the Blessed Mother a time for "another fiat", whereby she welcomed the destiny of her Son's life in total communion of love with Him: "and a sword will pierce your own heart too". This is the mystery of Her Maternal Heart, which so many saints of the Church have understood, that Her Heart was one with the Heart of Her Son. She teaches us that love can not be true love, unless it is willing to suffer with and for the Beloved.

Saint Claire of Assisi, as a result of her own life experience, tells us: "Love which is not able to suffer is not

worthy of its name". Love, therefore, is the richest source which enables us to understand the true meaning of suffering, which has always been and will continue to be a mystery. In order to discover, as far as possible, what this mystery, what this hidden treasure is all about, we must contemplate the cross of Christ: the redemptive love of Christ who gave himself up for us, loving us to the extreme by surrendering his own life in order to save us.

Definitely, Christ's love, revealed in its utmost expression on the cross, gives a new meaning, a new value to human suffering. "The cross of Christ —His passion—sheds a completely new light over this mystery, overall, giving it a new sense and meaning, to human suffering" (cf. John Paul II, General Audience, Nov. 9, 1988).

In order to be able to grasp the most profound meaning of suffering, we are to look to and from the cross of Christ, and thus be able to understand it from the language of the redemptive and oblation love of His Heart. We will not be able to comprehend the most profound meaning of the Cross, unless we contemplate it from the love of the Heart of Christ, as an eloquent expression of love to the extreme. "Behold the Heart who has so much loved humanity without sparing anything to manifest it" (Words of Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque on the Octave of Corpus Christi 1675, during the Fourth Revelation of His Heart)

May the Heart of Christ, pierced on the Cross, becoming the fountain of life, reveal to us the redemptive power of love, the fruitful power of suffering embraced for love and in love.

In the love of the Pierced Hearts,

Mother Adela, SCTJM

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