

Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time
Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost (Latin)
October 20, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #43

“But in order to perceive the true answer to the ‘why’ of suffering, we must look to the revelation of divine love, the ultimate source of the meaning of everything that exists.”
(Apostolic Letter of John Paul II, On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, p.17)

In his 1984 Apostolic Letter, On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, Pope Saint John Paul II wrote this one line: *“Salvation means liberation from evil, and for this reason it is closely bound up with the problem of suffering.”* (p. 18). As a review, during this year of study on the Eucharist, we have journeyed from the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Gethsemane. It was in Eden, as you recall, where man and woman first disobeyed God. As the resulting punishment for their choice, all of mankind will experience separation, suffering and death. In essence, the child of love permanently separates themselves from the parent/parents by their selfish choice. Honestly, I know of NO example to present to you slightly equivalent to the devastating insult, the slap in the face, heaped upon God in that moment. A sacrificial offering would be required as an expiation, a means of making amends. God, knowing this to be impossible for man, must perform the necessary action Himself. Yet, He does not want to exclude man from this Divine Apology. Man must cooperate with God. However, for man to engage God, man must be prepared. In the Old Testament, God would gradually reveal to man how this would be accomplished. It is through His Incarnation in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary where God, in the Person of His Word, will make this a reality.

I can remember how fans of the New Orleans Saints professional football team would display signs proclaiming John 3:16. *“For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not die but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16). Have you ever thought about that line of Sacred Scripture? Ask yourself this question: What is the opposite of eternal life? It would seem reasonable to assume the answer to be eternal death. Our Christian Faith names this “eternal death” as the eternal separation experienced by those souls who are damned to Hell by their rejection to live as His Love requires. To be eternally separated from God is that which Jesus came to save us from.

As we stated prior, to complete this task, Jesus would become flesh. God chooses to immerse Himself into the daily lives of His children. He experiences the continual sufferings His children cope with. Jesus will seek to alleviate this suffering through His healings of illnesses and resurrecting of those who had died. Coupled with these healings, He will forgive those whose sins have driven a wedge between themselves and His Father. These special acts, however, are received by so very few. We believe more were suffering various illnesses in Judea than those few who felt His healing touch. Jesus MUST obediently perform one action which will heal ALL mankind and thus provide a bridge for man to traverse which spans the chasm between himself and God. He will offer Himself as THAT SACRIFICE. It is this one act of love, endured in and through

suffering, which frees all of His children. Eternal death is no longer man's destined end; he is now free to experience eternal life.

How great must the love of God be for His children to abolish the iniquity of all human sin? The suffering of Jesus upon Calvary overcomes the punishment due as a result of all human sin. My family, the meaning for the suffering of Jesus is that you and I may now experience eternal life. The truth of the love God has for His children is on display each time we see His broken Body suspended upon the wood of a cross. A child may show their mother or father how much they love them by stretching out their arms as wide as they are able. The arms of God have been stretched from Genesis to Revelation, Beginning to End, upon the cross for love of us. His suffering is our salvation.