

*a sermon from COLOSSIANS 1:24*

ON SUFFERING OFFERED UP IN CHRIST

Robert Baral  
8/10/2007 AD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. A PRAYER

II. A SCRIPTURE VERSE – COLOSSIANS 1:24 – OUR SUFFERING IN CHRIST

III. A PROPOSITION

IV. INTRODUCTION

V. WE ARE HEIRS OF BOTH CHRIST’S SUFFERING AND CHRIST’S VICTORY

VI. OUR HELP, HOPE AND STRENGTH IS IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

VII. OFFERING UP OUR SUFFERING IN CHRIST DRAWS US CLOSER TO HIM

VIII. SACRAMENTS GIVE US GRACE AND STRENGTH TO ENDURE IN CHRIST

IX. THE SALVIFIC WORTH OF OUR SUFFERING IN UNION WITH CHRIST

X. CHRIST SUFFERED AND DIED FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT LIVE IN HIM

XI. LET US TAKE UP OUR CROSSES AND FOLLOW OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

XII. IN CONCLUSION

XIII. REFERENCES

### I. A PRAYER

“O JESUS [our blessed Saviour], You [O CHRIST,] suffered and died for us; You understand [our human] suffering; Teach... [us] to understand... [our own] suffering as You do; To bear it in union with You; To offer it with You... [in the sanctifying of our souls, in the drawing of our hearts closer to You, in the remaking of our lives into that which is holy in Your sight,] And to bring [knowledge of] Your Grace to souls in need.

Calm... [our frail] fears; increase... [our faltering faith and teach us to place our] trust [in You]. May... [we] gladly accept Your holy will and become more like You in Trial, [that we may learn to bear one another’s burdens, pray for one another, forgive one another and love one another as You love us.] If it be Your will, restore... [us] to health [in all ways according to Your purposes,] so that... [we] may work for Your honor and glory and the salvation of all...”<sup>1</sup> And if we must continue to bear our crosses, O Lord, let us do so in You, that we may glorify Your Name. In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. Amen.

II. A SCRIPTURE VERSE – COLOSSIANS 1:24 – OUR SUFFERING IN CHRIST  
[Saint Paul writes to The Church at Colossae,] “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of CHRIST on behalf of His Body, which is The Church.”<sup>2</sup>

### III. A PROPOSITION

We as the sons and daughters of CHRIST are not promised that we shall have no suffering in this life. But when we offer up our suffering to The Lord, whether on behalf of others or for ourselves, we share in our Saviour’s suffering which bought His victory. And we do not walk through that suffering alone, for He is there with us, in the midst of that suffering, drawing us closer to and sanctifying us in Himself. His suffering is our suffering, but His victory is then our victory as well. For then we learn to pick up our own crosses of suffering and rejection to follow CHRIST - bearing the burdens of others,

---

<sup>1</sup> 1, Catholic Family Prayer Book, p 303. Suffering and Trials. “Prayer in Time of Sickness.”

<sup>2</sup> 2, NAB, COLOSSIANS 1:24.

praying for others, forgiving others and loving others sacrificially – as our loving Lord does for us!

#### IV. INTRODUCTION

How are we to understand Christian suffering? Are we, as the saints of GOD, guaranteed somehow that we shall not endure any suffering in this life? No, we are rather told by our Lord Himself as in MARK 8:34, "...Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up His cross, and follow Me!"<sup>3</sup> JESUS CHRIST suffered in His Passion and on The Cross for us, even unto death, bearing the sins of the whole world upon Himself. In our suffering, JESUS our Redeemer draws us into Himself. He uses it to sanctify us in Himself. And in our suffering, if we will walk through it with Him, The Lord shares with us both His own suffering endured for us and His victory won for us at The blessed Cross.

So Saint Paul declares in COLOSSIANS 1:24 as he writes to The Church at Colossae, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of CHRIST on behalf of His Body, which is The Church."<sup>4</sup> For as we shall see, we as the sons and daughters of CHRIST are not promised that we shall have no suffering in this life. But when we offer up our suffering to The Lord, whether on behalf of others or for ourselves, we share in both The Saviour's suffering and victory. And we do not walk through that suffering alone, for He is there with us, in the midst of that suffering drawing us closer to and sanctifying us in Himself!

Now there are many kinds of suffering, and many reasons that the saints of GOD suffer in this world. There is the suffering of serious illness, injury and impending death. There is the suffering which comes about because of the errors and sins of ourselves and others. There is the suffering of persecution for righteousness' sake. But in all these forms of suffering of the redeemed of GOD on earth, if we will but walk through them with CHRIST and offer them up to Him, He will take what is broken and turn it for our

---

<sup>3</sup> 2, NAB, MARK 8:34.

<sup>4</sup> 2, NAB, COLOSSIANS 1:24.

good and the good of others. He will walk through the dark valleys with us. And He will use it to sanctify us, others around us and His Church on earth, all according to His will. For then, as Saint Paul declares to us in ROMANS 8:28, “We know that all things work for good for those who love GOD, who are called according to His purpose”<sup>5</sup>

#### V. WE ARE HEIRS OF BOTH CHRIST’S SUFFERING AND CHRIST’S VICTORY

If we are in Him, shall we then not bear the crosses of our lives, and carry them by His Grace? As sons and daughters of GOD in CHRIST, we are heirs to both His suffering and His victory. For He suffered for us, that in overcoming death and hell, we might have victory in Him in the forgiveness of our sins and in eternal life with Him forever! As the Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes, a man’s “...union with CHRIST involves... union with CHRIST’s sufferings...,” as well as with CHRIST’s victories. For in our oneness with and imitation of CHRIST, as it is often said, “The Crown of thorns stands over The Crown of glory!”<sup>6</sup> So if we would as Christians possess the one, we can not deny the other.

We share in The Saviour’s victory because we share in His suffering. Therefore Saint Paul declares in ROMANS 8:16-17, “The Spirit [of GOD] Itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of GOD, and if children, then heirs, heirs of GOD and joint heirs with CHRIST, if only we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”<sup>7</sup> This, as Wycliffe observes, rests upon “...the sole redemptive sufficiency [for the saving of our souls and adoption as sons and daughters of GOD] ...in CHRIST and His atonement” made for us at The Cross. We as Christians share in CHRIST’s sufferings because we “...have been redeemed by The Blood of The Redeemer, not as an aid to... [our] redemption,” and yet – in our suffering – the heart that is open to GOD is most in those times drawn closest to CHRIST!<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> 2, NAB, ROMANS 8:28.

<sup>6</sup> 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, COLOSSIANS 1:24, p 1339. “E. Paul: CHRIST’s Minister of Reconciliation. 1:24-29.”

<sup>7</sup> 2, NAB, ROMANS 8:16-17.

<sup>8</sup> 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, COLOSSIANS 1:24, p 1339. “E. Paul: CHRIST’s Minister of Reconciliation. 1:24-29.”

Suffering given up to CHRIST is a great Mystery of The Almighty working in us, that we as His saints saved by His Blood are called to be purged and perfected in this life as we walk through our sufferings and sorrows with Him. Contemplating The Words of COLOSSIANS 1:24 and the meaning of Christian suffering, Pope John Paul II comments, “Saint Paul speaks of true joy in The Letter to The Colossians: ‘I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.’ A source of joy is found in the overcoming of the sense of the uselessness of suffering, a feeling that is sometimes very strongly rooted in human suffering. This feeling not only consumes the person interiorly, but seems to make him a burden to others. The person feels condemned to receive help and assistance from others, and at the same time seems useless to himself...”<sup>9</sup> Such is the uselessness of any human experience apart from The Creator.

But if we offer up our suffering to The LORD, and seek His face most especially in those times of dark valleys, He takes those afflictions and uses them for our good and the good of others for the building up of The Body of CHRIST, Which is The Church! So Pope John Paul II continues, “The discovery of the salvific meaning of suffering in union with CHRIST transforms this depressing feeling” by drawing us into the heart of GOD – Perfect Divine Love - and causing us to then reflect that same Love back to those around us!<sup>10</sup> When we cry out, “O GOD, why am I here to endure this trial? Why am I still alive? Why do You not yet take me home to Heaven Above?” – then He answers, “You are My servant. You are in Me and I in You. I call you to live out Who I am as a testimony to others for The Kingdom of the righteous! Reflect back The Divine Love of The I AM as I love you!” For as Saint John declares in I JOHN 4:8, “...GOD is love!”<sup>11</sup>

Saint Rose of Lima – born in 1586 AD in Lima, Peru – was a holy servant of CHRIST who gave herself completely up to the service of The Church, even in the midst of suffering, and indeed by offering up her suffering in CHRIST for the sanctification of

---

<sup>9</sup> 4, Marcus Grodi, “How Firm a Foundation,” p 347-348. Quote of Pope John Paul II from his book, “The Christian Meaning of Suffering,” paragraph 27.

<sup>10</sup> 4, Marcus Grodi, “How Firm a Foundation,” p 347-348. Quote of Pope John Paul II from his book, “The Christian Meaning of Suffering,” paragraph 27.

<sup>11</sup> 2, NAB, I JOHN 4:8.

her soul and that of others.<sup>12</sup> She saw clearly that The Christian life entails both the suffering and also the victory of our Lord. So she declared, “Let all men know that Grace comes after tribulation. ...[For] without the burden of afflictions [of The Way of our Lord] it is impossible to reach the height of Grace [in CHRIST]. ...that the gifts of Grace increase as the struggles increase. [For] ...without The Cross... [we] can find no road to climb to Heaven!”<sup>13</sup> With Saint Rose we may take refuge with David under the sheltering shadow of The Almighty’s Grace, as he declares in PSALM 37:39-40, “The salvation of the just is from The LORD, their refuge in time of distress. The LORD helps and rescues them, rescues and saves them from the wicked, because in GOD they take refuge!”<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, the salvific meaning of suffering in union with CHRIST is heard from the deep valleys of despair in PSALM 23:3-6, from which GOD raises us up to the mountain tops of joy in His Presence at The blessed Cross: O Lord JESUS CHRIST, my ever constant Good Shepherd, “You restore my strength. You guide me along the right path for the sake of Your Name. Even when I walk through a dark valley, I fear no harm for You are at my side; Your rod and staff give me courage. You set a table before me as my enemies watch; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and love will pursue me all the days of my life; I will dwell in The House of The LORD for years to come!”<sup>15</sup>

## VI. OUR HELP, HOPE AND STRENGTH IS IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Where then is our help as Christians when we suffer, no matter the cause, and regardless of whether we can see the source of our suffering or not? Our hope is in The Rock of our salvation, JESUS CHRIST, Who alone saves and sustains us through His faithful Church, His Sacraments, His Word and His Spirit! Consider what the Psalmist

---

<sup>12</sup> 5, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, “Rose of Lima, Virgin,” p 1341. “Saint Rose was born at Lima, Peru in 1586 [AD]. She led a virtuous life at home and, after receiving the habit of The Third Order of Saint Dominic, she made great progress in a life of penance and contemplation. She died August 24, 1617 [AD].”

<sup>13</sup> 5, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1342, paragraph 1. “From the writings of Saint Rose of Lima, virgin.”

<sup>14</sup> 2, NAB, PSALM 37:39-40.

<sup>15</sup> 2, NAB, PSALM 23:3-6.

declares in PSALM 121:1-2, that in the midst of trials and sorrows, the godly man calls out this prayer to The Creator, "...I raise my eyes toward the mountains. From where will my help come? My help comes from The LORD, The Maker of heaven and earth!"<sup>16</sup> Our help as those saved by The precious Blood of CHRIST comes, not from the false idols of the world upon the hilltops of man's vain imaginations, but from GOD Incarnate Who suffered and died on The Cross to buy back our lives and souls from sin, sorrow and eternal separation from Himself!

And let us note this well, that we as the sons and daughters of CHRIST are not promised that we shall have no suffering in this life. But when we offer up our suffering to The Lord, whether on behalf of others or for ourselves, we share in both The Saviour's suffering and victory. And we do not walk through that suffering alone, for He is there with us, in the midst of that suffering to draw us closer to and sanctify us in Himself! So The Psalmist, under the hand of The HOLY SPIRIT, answers his own question for us in PSALM 121:3-6, "GOD will not allow your foot to slip; your [Eternal] Guardian [Above] does not sleep. Truly, The Guardian of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps. The LORD is your [ever vigilant] Guardian; The LORD is your shade at your right hand. By day the sun cannot harm you, nor the moon by night!"<sup>17</sup>

Saint Padre Pio observes here, most especially when we as Christians are in the midst of suffering in this life, that it is in the midst of life's trials and dark valleys that we most hunger for The Lord. It is then, even more so that when we stand in the midst of life's comforts and mountain peaks, that our souls cry out, O "When will... JESUS consume me entirely by His holy Love? When can I be utterly consumed by The Divine fire? When can I be so closely united to Him that I can sing a completely new song, the canticle of victory? When will there be an end to this interior combat between evil and my poor soul, which wants to belong entirely to its Heavenly Spouse," my blessed Saviour and Comforter JESUS CHRIST?<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> 2, NAB, PSALM 121:1-2.

<sup>17</sup> 2, NAB, PSALM 121:3-6.

<sup>18</sup> 6, Eileen Bertanzetti, "Praying The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio," PSALM 121, p 137, paragraph 2.



It is as if the Psalmist hears Saint Padre Pio speaking these very questions on behalf of our souls, for the Psalmist next declares in PSALM 121:7-8, “The LORD will guard you from all evil, will always guard your life. The LORD will guard your coming and going both now and forever!”<sup>19</sup> Saint Padre Pio echoes the same answer of These Words of Scripture, that The LORD keeps us His saints from all evil and keeps our lives from perishing. Not that we are not to face evil in this life, but walking with The Almighty by our side, He gives us The Grace to overcome evil and grow closer to Him. And not that His saints will not suffer - sometimes even dying for the sake of The Faith - but that our eternal souls are forever safe in the palm of His Providential hand.

#### VII. OFFERING UP OUR SUFFERING IN CHRIST DRAWS US CLOSER TO HIM

Saint Paul then calls us in ROMANS 12:1, “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of GOD, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to GOD, your spiritual worship.”<sup>20</sup> This includes the offering up to CHRIST of all that we are and do that is of GOD to Him: our faith, our lives, our hearts, souls and minds, our good works, our victories and our sufferings in and through our blessed Redeemer. Saint Rose of Lima sees this, for when troubles heap up one upon another in our lives – of whatever source and nature – when we allow ourselves to be drawn closer to The Lord as a result, we are drawn into “...a deep participation of The Divine Nature, The Glory of the Son... of GOD and perfect happiness of soul.”<sup>21</sup>

Trials and sorrows harden the heart of the ungodly, but draw the righteous who hunger for GOD ever deeper into His Grace! The suffering man and woman, whose joy and strength is in the salvation of The Cross, are to call upon The Church and receive the blessings and ministries of the people of GOD. So are we lifted up, though we be broken down, as our blessed Redeemer reaches His strong arm of deliverance to grasp our outstretched open hands as we call out to Him! What does Saint James command us when we are suffering? He declares to us in JAMES 5:13-15, “Is anyone among you

---

<sup>19</sup> 2, NAB, PSALM 121:7-8.

<sup>20</sup> 2, NAB, ROMANS 12:1.

<sup>21</sup> 5, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1342, paragraph 2. “From the writings of saint Rose of Lima, virgin.”

suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of The Church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in The Name of The Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and The Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.”<sup>22</sup>

Such are the visible signs, seals and channels of Divine Grace offered to the Christian man and woman in the midst of suffering, dispensed by The faithful Church as if from the very hand of JESUS Himself reaching out in Divine Love to comfort and deliver us! Therefore the Catechism of The Catholic Church states of The Sacrament of The Sick, “By The Grace of This Sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to CHRIST’s Passion: in a certain way he is consecrated to bear fruit by configuration to The Saviour’s redemptive Passion. Suffering, a consequence of Original Sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving Work of JESUS” CHRIST on our behalf!<sup>23</sup>

The writer of HEBREWS also speaks of our call to participate in the suffering and victory of CHRIST in HEBREWS 2:9-11, “but we do see JESUS ‘crowned with glory and honor’ because He suffered death, He Who ‘for a little while’ was made ‘lower than the angels,’ that by The Grace of GOD He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that He, for Whom and through Whom all things exist, in bringing many children to Glory, should make The Leader to their salvation perfect through suffering. He Who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have One Origin. Therefore, He is not ashamed to call them ‘brothers.’”<sup>24</sup>

#### VIII. SACRAMENTS GIVE US GRACE AND STRENGTH TO ENDURE IN CHRIST

As the Catechism of The Catholic Church explains further, The Sacraments in general and The Sacrament of The Sick in particular administer to us “...strengthening,

---

<sup>22</sup> 2, NAB, JAMES 5:13-15.

<sup>23</sup> 7, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1521, p 423. The Sacrament of The Sick. “Union with The Passion of CHRIST.”

<sup>24</sup> 2, NAB, HEBREWS 2:9-11.

peace and courage to overcome the condition[s] that go with the serious... [afflictions and trials of the body, mind and soul]. This Grace is a gift of The HOLY SPIRIT, Who renews trust and faith in GOD and strengthens against the temptations of the evil one, the temptation to discouragement and anguish in the face of [serious illness, injury and] death. This assistance from The Lord, by The Power of His Spirit, is meant to lead the sick person to healing of the soul, but also of the body if such is GOD's will. Furthermore, [as Saint James says in JAMES 5:15], 'if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.'"<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the suffering Christian, when he brings his afflictions before and lives them in The Lord, completes in a great mystical way the suffering of CHRIST for the purifying of himself or herself and others, The Church on earth. It is during times of suffering that the godly man sees the allures of the world, the flesh and the devil most clearly for what they are in their true emptiness, desiring instead to receive GOD's Grace to work in him, that he be made more holy and GOD is holy; to be made ready in his soul to dwell with The Lord in Eternity! While suffering causes the ungodly man to harden his heart against The Almighty, it causes the godly man to seek confession and repentance of sin; to walk more closely with The Maker; to become more and more as CHRIST and in CHRIST! So in the midst of suffering, when the false gods of the world, the flesh and the devil fall away and fail us, there is JESUS The Messiah, beaconing us as in MATTHEW 11:28 to take His hand and receive His Grace, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest!"<sup>26</sup>

As Pope John Paul II says, "Faith in sharing in the suffering of CHIST brings with it the interior certainty that the suffering person 'completes what is lacking in CHRIST's afflictions;' the certainty that in the spiritual dimension of the work of Redemption he is serving like CHRIST, the salvation of his brothers and sisters. Therefore, he is carrying out an irreplaceable service. In The Body of CHRIST, Which is ceaselessly born of The Cross of The Redeemer, it is precisely suffering permeated by The Spirit of CHRIST's

---

<sup>25</sup> 7, Catechism of The Catholic church, # 1520, p 423. The Sacrament of The Sick. "A particular gift of The HOLY SPIRIT."

<sup>26</sup> 2, NAB, MATTHEW 11:28.

sacrifice that is the irreplaceable Mediator and Author of the good things which are indispensable for the world's salvation.”<sup>27</sup>

So suffering in CHRIST brings with it great fruits of piety, purity and personal growth in The Lord. Not that we need to desire such crosses in our earthly lives, but that when they come, GOD allows them at times to draw us closer to Him. And yet, The Almighty does not ask us to bear more than we are able, but walking with us, He allows us a means of escape according to His will. Sometimes this is deliverance. Sometimes this is healing of the mind and the body. Sometimes this is physical death, we then being called Home Above to Him. And in all these, there is GOD's Mercy, as Saint Paul declares in I CORINTHIANS 10:13, “No trial has come to you but what is human. GOD is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial He will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it!”<sup>28</sup>

#### IX. THE SALVIFIC WORTH OF OUR SUFFERING IN UNION WITH CHRIST

What then is the value of suffering in CHRIST, sharing in some small way the suffering which GOD Incarnate on The Cross endured for us? Is there then worth in suffering in CHRIST for others? Yes, when we offer up that suffering to The Lord and we allow it to be used by GOD to draw us and others closer to our loving Saviour! We as Christians do not always understand in this life why we or our love ones are called to endure sufferings. Sometimes the cause of our suffering is from error or sin by our own hands. Sometimes our suffering is from error or sin by the hands of others, in some cases from the hands of loved ones or friends, at other times from the hands of strangers or enemies.

At other times the cause of suffering is seemingly not apparent to us and there is no immediate source of it to our eyes. As Saint Paul declares in I CORINTHIANS 13:12, “At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know

---

<sup>27</sup> 4, Marcus Grodi, “How Firm a Foundation,” p 348. Quote of Pope John Paul II from his book, “The Christian Meaning of Suffering,” paragraph 27.

<sup>28</sup> 2, NAB, I CORINTHIANS 10:13.

partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known.”<sup>29</sup> Until The Lord reveals these things fully to us in Heaven, we are called to continue in faith, hold fast to our hope and dwell in The Presence of His love. These three are ours in CHRIST now, and are given to us in this life, in part that we may better bear our crosses in The Lord. We should note carefully what Saint Paul declares next in I CORINTHIANS 13:13, “So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”<sup>30</sup>

Pope John Paul II observes further, “It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for The Grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of The Redemption. In that ‘cosmic’ struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in The Letter to The Ephesians, human suffering, united to the redemptive suffering of CHRIST, constitute a special support for the powers of good, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers.”<sup>31</sup>

As Saint Paul reminds us of this present struggle in EPHESIANS 6:11-12, “Put on the full armour of GOD so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of GOD, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand!”<sup>32</sup>

By GOD’s Grace, we are equipped, trained and led – within The Church as part of The Body of CHRIST on earth – to carry on our daily warfare against the snares of the world, the flesh and most especially the devil, who is the father of all lies. This struggle is ours as Christians even, and most particularly, when we are in the midst of suffering which we offer up to CHRIST. The devil is no doubt content if, when we suffer, be

---

<sup>29</sup> 2, NAB, I CORINTHIANS 13:12.

<sup>30</sup> 2, NAB, I CORINTHIANS 13:13.

<sup>31</sup> 4, Marcus Grodi, “How Firm a Foundation,” p 348. Quote of Pope John Paul II from his book, “The Christian Meaning of Suffering,” paragraph 27.

<sup>32</sup> 2, NAB, EPHESIANS 6:1-2.

become bitter and angry at GOD, turning our faces as it were from the loving heart of JESUS. But by The HOLY SPIRIT, Saint Paul goes on to list the defensive and offensive weaponry with which The LORD equips us for the battles which rage over our souls: truth, righteousness, The Gospel and the peace which It imparts, faith, our salvation, The entire Word of GOD and prayer.

Saint Paul goes on to list this weaponry for us in EPHESIANS 6:14-18, “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from The Gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of The Spirit, which is The Word of GOD. And pray in The Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”<sup>33</sup>

#### X. CHRIST SUFFERED AND DIED FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT LIVE IN HIM

In all The Gospels, JESUS reveals that He must suffer and die for the sake of those who are His, for the sins of all the world, that all men might have the opportunity to take hold of GOD’s Grace and pardon at The blessed Cross. So we read in MARK 8:31, “He began to teach them that The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days.”<sup>34</sup> Here again we observe that, without the crown of thorns first, JESUS could not attain for Himself and thus for us the crown of victory! It was ordained of GOD that JESUS had to both suffer and be rejected of men – even unto death – so that He might rise again as The Redeemer and Saviour!

The Reverend Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Protestant clergyman who was persecuted, suffered in a Gestapo prison camp and was eventually martyred at the hands of the Nazis in World War II, observes in his book “The Cost of Discipleship” that “...in

---

<sup>33</sup> 2, NAB, EPHESIANS 6:14-18.

<sup>34</sup> 2, NAB, MARK 8:31.

The Passion JESUS is [both a suffering and] a rejected Messiah... It must be a Passion without honour... [For] to die on The Cross means to die despised and rejected of men. Suffering and rejection are laid upon JESUS as a Divine necessity, and every attempt to prevent it is the work of the devil... for it is in fact an attempt to prevent CHRIST from being CHRIST!”<sup>35</sup>

But it could only be so, that JESUS The Messiah fulfill the will of GOD for the redemption of the world and man in His Passion, death and resurrection as the prophet foretold in ISAIAH 53:3-6, “He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, One of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned, and we held Him in no esteem. Yet it was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured, While we thought of Him as stricken, as one smitten by GOD and afflicted. But He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, Upon Him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by His stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; But The LORD laid upon Him the guilt of us all!”<sup>36</sup>

Recall in The Gospel records that even Saint Peter reprimanded The Master when He revealed to the Disciples that The Son of Man must suffer and die according to The Scriptures. For Peter, the very Rock upon which CHRIST established His Church on earth, dared to rebuke The Lord for revealing His coming Passion and Cross for them. Saint Peter did not realize then that it was the devil who desired above all to prevent GOD Incarnate, JESUS CHRIST, from redeeming the world and men on The Cross by offering up Himself in suffering even unto death for us! But in MARK 8:33 we read, “At this... [JESUS] turned around and, looking at His disciples, rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind Me, Satan. You are thinking not as GOD does, but as human beings do.’”<sup>37</sup> Seeing then that our Redeemer suffered and was rejected by the world, should we as His expect any less?

---

<sup>35</sup> 8, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “The Cost of Discipleship,” p 87. “Chapter 4. Discipleship and The Cross.”

<sup>36</sup> 2, NAB, ISAIAH 53:3-6.

<sup>37</sup> 2, NAB, MARK 8:33.

## XI. LET US TAKE UP OUR CROSSES AND FOLLOW OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

What does it look like when the faithful Christian, in the midst of suffering of whatever cause and of whatever type, endures in CHRIST for the sake of The Lord and for others? He is a faithful one who hears The Word of The Lord and obeys, as in MARK 8:34-35, "... 'Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and that of The Gospel will save it...!'"<sup>38</sup> Unless our eyes are set firmly upon JESUS CHRIST first and above all else, we find ourselves trying to claim CHRIST and at the same time hold on to the things of the world, the flesh and the devil. We are then building up idols upon the throne of our hearts, and our loyalty is divided.

We can not have it both ways, a realization that the godly man soon comes to see most keenly in the midst of suffering. If we are to offer up our suffering to CHRIST, our allegiance must be to Him first. All the idols of our lives must be cast down! As Saint Luke records The Words of our Lord in LUKE 16:13, "'No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both GOD and Money,'" that is, anything which is an idol in our lives.<sup>39</sup> For though we might indeed gain the whole world, what value is it, if our eternal souls are cut off from GOD both now and forever? So Reverend Bonhoeffer observes, "To deny oneself is to be aware only of CHRIST and no more of self, to see only Him Who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us." So we must confess every day in all things, even in the midst of suffering, "He leads the way, [and I seek to] keep close to Him!"<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, if we are to be in CHRIST and offer up our sufferings to Him, we must put away all other temptations of life, and serve Him first and totally. We must pick up the cross that GOD has ordained for each of us to carry in CHRIST. We must as Saint

---

<sup>38</sup> 2, NAB, MARK 8:34-35.

<sup>39</sup> 2, NAB, LUKE 16:13.

<sup>40</sup> 8, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Cost of Discipleship," p 88, paragraph 1. "Chapter 4. Discipleship and The Cross."



Paul declares in GALATIANS 6:2, “Bear one another's burdens...”<sup>41</sup> We must as Saint James declares in JAMES 5:16, “...confess your sins to one another and pray for one another...”<sup>42</sup> We must as Saint Matthew records of The very Words of CHRIST in MATTHEW 6:12, “...forgive our debtors” as The LORD Himself “...forgive[s] us our debts.”<sup>43</sup> And we must love one another, even when we are not first loved by others, as Saint John records The very Words of CHRIST in JOHN 15:12, “This is My Commandment: love one another as I love you.”<sup>44</sup>

Such things are not easy. They themselves may inflict “wounds and scars” upon our souls. But such sacrificial suffering for others in CHRIST then become “...living tokens of... [our] participation in The Cross” of our Redeemer. And our Lord gives The Grace necessary to bear these things, as Bonhoeffer says, in that “The Passion of CHRIST strengthens... [us] to overcome the sins of others by forgiving them” – even when the offender has neither made amends nor asked for our forgiveness. But as we learn to take up such crosses, we then “...becomes a bearer of other men’s burdens” in CHRIST.<sup>45</sup> What does Saint Matthew record that our Lord declares in The Sermon on The Mount in MATTHEW 5:10? “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is The Kingdom of Heaven!”<sup>46</sup>

We must bear one another’s burdens, pray for one another, forgive one another and love one another sacrificially, even when to do so brings us suffering and rejection upon our heads – even for some the suffering and rejection of martyrdom – as CHRIST has done and continues always to do for us! For as Saint Paul declares to us in ROMANS 5:8, “But GOD proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners CHRIST died for us!”<sup>47</sup> And when doing what CHRIST commands us - living the Love towards others which He has for us - brings upon us more suffering, what does Saint

---

<sup>41</sup> 2, NAB, GALATIANS 6:2.

<sup>42</sup> 2, NAB, JAMES 5:16.

<sup>43</sup> 2, NAB, MATTHEW 6:12.

<sup>44</sup> 2, NAB, JOHN 15:12.

<sup>45</sup> 8, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “The Cost of Discipleship,” p 90. “Chapter 4. Discipleship and The Cross.”

<sup>46</sup> 2, NAB, MATTHEW 5:10.

<sup>47</sup> 2, NAB, ROMANS 5:8.

Matthew next records in our Lord declaring in The Sermon on The Mount? CHRIST gives us This Assurance in MATTHEW 5:11-12, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you!”<sup>48</sup> As CHRIST suffered on The Cross for us, so we must be prepared to suffer for others in CHRIST, taking up the crosses which He sets before us.

## XII. IN CONCLUSION

What Truths of The blessed Cross of our Redeemer have we seen here together? First, that we are heirs of both CHRIST’s suffering and CHRIST’s victory. As He could not be The Messiah without both, neither can we be His Disciples without both. Second, that our help, hope and strength in the midst of all sufferings lay only in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Third, that our offering up of our sufferings in CHRIST draws us closer to Him, purging us of the idols of our lives as in a purifying fire, for He is The One Who sustains us in the midst of our suffering when we are His.

Fourth, that The blessed Sacraments of The faithful Church give us the Grace and strength to endure our sufferings in CHRIST. Fifth, that there is a deep Mystery of salvific worth to our sufferings when we are in union with CHRIST. Sixth, that CHRIST suffered, was rejected and died on The blessed Cross for us, that we might live in Him. Seventh, that if we are then living in our Lord JESUS CHRIST, He calls us to take up our own crosses and follow Him. We are to bear one another’s burdens, pray for one another, forgive one another and love one another. We are called to these things, even when to do so brings suffering upon our heads for the sake of others in CHRIST.

So we now hopefully see these Truths of The Cross more clearly: We as the sons and daughters of CHRIST are not promised that we shall have no suffering in this life. But when we offer up our suffering to The Lord, whether on behalf of others or for ourselves, we share in our Saviour’s suffering which bought His victory. And we do not

---

<sup>48</sup> 2, NAB, MATTHEW 5:11-12.

walk through that suffering alone, for He is there with us, in the midst of that suffering drawing us closer to and sanctifying us in Himself. His suffering is our suffering, but His victory is then our victory as well.

For then we learn to pick up our own crosses of suffering and rejection to follow CHRIST - bearing the burdens of others, praying for others, forgiving others and loving others sacrificially – as our loving Lord does for us! For as Saint Paul writes to The Church at Colossae, so he also declares by The HOLY SPIRIT to us, as in COLOSSIANS 1:24, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of CHRIST on behalf of His Body, which is The Church.”<sup>49</sup> In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. Amen.

---

<sup>49</sup> 2, NAB, COLOSSIANS 1:24.

XIII. REFERENCES

1. "Catholic Family Prayer Book." Jacquelyn Lindsey, Editor. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, Indiana. 2001.
2. "New American Bible." Bible Works 6. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
3. "The Wycliffe Bible Commentary." Edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer & Everett F. Harrison. The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Moody Press. 3<sup>rd</sup> printing, 1966.
4. "How Firm A Foundation." Marcus Grodi. Coming Home Resources. Zanesville, Ohio. 2002.
5. "The Divine Office of The Liturgy of the Hours, According to The Roman Rite, Volume IV, Ordinary Time, Weeks 18-34." International Commission on English in The Liturgy. Catholic Book Publishing Corp. New York. 1975.
6. "Praying The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio." Eileen Dunn Bertanzetti. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, Indiana. 2006.
7. "Catechism of The Catholic Church." United States Catholic Conference. Doubleday of Random House, Inc. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland. 1995.
8. "The Cost of Discipleship." The Reverend Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Touchstone Books, New York, New York. 1959 SCM Press Ltd. First Touchstone Edition, 1995.