

Small Groups

Discussion Questions for October 4, 2015 – Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Through suffering there is salvation. It's a strange notion. We pray all the time to be relieved of certain suffering. We thank God when our suffering ends. We acknowledge, though, that suffering is always with us in one form or another. When one suffering ends, another begins. So how is this related to salvation? It is related only through God's actions in history when he allowed his only Son to feel the same suffering we do, to the fullest. Because he died for us, allowed himself to be crucified, he experienced an amazing extreme of suffering that most of us will never face. But before the cross, Jesus also suffered in the little ways that we do. His foster father died, his town rejected him, one of his closest friends betrayed him to his death. Because he led the way, we can attach our suffering to his. Since his suffering opened the gates of heaven to us, our own suffering, in communion with his, will also be the catalyst that gets us to heaven. Suffering cannot be avoided, so instead of seeing it as some kind of punishment, welcome it as a gift for our glory and redemption, a difficult, but inevitable stepping stone to heaven.

Discussion Questions

1. Read aloud the paragraph above and discuss some suffering that you went through that you were able to see, maybe afterwards, as a blessing.
2. In this week's Gospel, Jesus talks about marriage and divorce. In what ways can our Parish, and the Church universal, welcome people who have gone through a divorce without adding more pain to their already difficult circumstances. And how can we do that without compromising the teaching of the Church on the indissolubility of the sacrament of matrimony?
3. In prayer this week, pray the Apostles' Creed and stop at each line to reflect on what each line means to you and if there's anything in that verse that you might not have noticed before.
4. Each person offer up a couple intentions for someone you know who may need prayer. It can be work, family, school, substance abuse, anger, or any other issue weighing on your heart for that person. You don't need to name the person if you don't want to – God knows who everyone will be praying for.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, Son of the Almighty, you took upon your shoulders the sins of us all as you carried the instrument of your torture and death through streets of dirt. Your own brothers and sisters spat on you, whipped you, tore the skin from your bones and caused you incomprehensible suffering. Every painful step you took, dragging your tired feet, burdened with the weight of the cross, was one step closer to your death. Yet, you knew the heart of every man, woman and child you passed as you trudged through the shimmering heat and dust. Even as they taunted, beat and insulted you, you loved them. An instantaneous thought of anything less than love would have sent them to oblivion by your infinite power. But you did not forsake them. You loved them as you love us who do no less than those on the road to Calvary. We, too, spit on you, turn our backs on you and insult you through sin. But you love us still. Thank you from the depths of our hearts. We accept this undeserved love from you. We can't begin to thank you enough. You love the unlovable. For that we only ask your forgiveness and compassion. And, through your Holy Word, we know that all we have to do is ask and you will love us. What a beautiful, loving, personal and intimate God you are! We thank you again and strive to love you even more! Amen.