

Connections March 19, 2024
Real Suffering-Finding Hope and Healing in the Trials of Life
Week Three: Emotional Suffering

Opening Prayer: Prayer for Emotional Healing

Blessed Mother, pray for me to Jesus that I may experience calmness, tranquility, and peace in all my emotions.

Help me to grow in faith and love. Protect me from all that displeases God, and obtain for me serenity of mind, body, and spirit.

I place my trust and confidence in Your Heavenly intercession, Mary, my Mother, and I pray that God's blessings of mercy, grace and gentle goodness will bring me happiness, health, and well-being now and always. Amen.

-taken from Prayers of Healing and Good Health Honoring St. Pio of Pietrelcina

For Your Information:

1. All donations this evening will be sent to Caritas of Austin. You can donate in cash or write a check to: Caritas of Austin.

Meeting Schedule for Real Suffering by Bob Schuchts

March 19 Week Three: Emotional Suffering

April 2 Week Four: Spiritual Suffering

2. Devotion to the Seven Sorrows of Mary- handouts on blue

Guiding Scripture: Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life (John 11: 17-44)

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles^{*} away.

19 And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.

20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home.

21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.ⁱ

22 [But] even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise."

24 Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day."

5 Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,

26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27^{*} ⁱ She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you."

29 As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him.

30 For Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still where Martha had met him.

31 So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

32 When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed^{*} and deeply troubled,

34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see."

35 And Jesus wept.

36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him."

37 But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?"

38 So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.

39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days."

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?"

41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father,^{*} I thank you for hearing me.

42 I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me.

43 And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice,^{*} "Lazarus, come out!"

44 The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So, Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go."

How can we pray with you this week?

Video Notes

- ❖ Mary is known as Our Lady of Sorrows because of the emotional pain she experienced during her earthly life. Today, she is our model for how to bear this kind of pain.
 - Mary teaches us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus in all our sufferings.
 - Since Mary was so intimately united to her Son's sufferings, she helps us unite our own sufferings to his.
 - Since Mary was full of grace-always in communion with the Holy Spirit-she was able to experience joy in the middle of loss.
 - With faith and hope, Mary continued to love in the middle of her losses. Nonetheless, she experienced real suffering.
- ❖ In a mysterious way, times of sorrow can bring about the greatest joy. The feeling of loss strips away the distractions of life and helps us recognize the purest kinds of love that surrounds us.
- ❖ Grieving is a natural remedy for healing us emotionally. Those who bottle up their grief can experience the deeper pain of depression and despair.
- ❖ Jesus told us in his Sermon on the Mount that those who mourn will be comforted. (see Matthew 5:4) That comfort comes only if we are receptive to mourning and trust in God's greater purpose.
 - We become comforted when we allow ourselves to grieve our loss.
 - Be confident that we will see our loved ones again.

Discussion Questions

1. Share whatever you would like after watching these two emotionally charged videos.

If you feel comfortable, share any personal stories of your own emotional suffering and how these lessons ring true in your life.

- Healthy grieving helps ease the pain of loss.
 - Accepting compassion and care from others is helpful while grieving.
 - Becoming aware of the love and joy that surrounds you comforts.
2. Both videos focus on the emotional loss of loved ones. This type of loss is indeed great suffering. And there are other kinds of loss that can cause significant emotional suffering. No one is spared from this type of suffering in this world, not even Our Blessed Mother. The only choice we have is how we embrace our crosses, either willingly or begrudgingly.

No one is totally prepared to handle suffering or loss when it occurs. It does help to somewhat prepare yourself for the eventuality. Here are some thoughts to discuss.

- Remind yourself that Jesus told us that those who mourn will be comforted. Trust in that promise. *"God our Father, in His love and mercy, allows trials and sufferings in our lives to remind us of our need for Him, so that we might turn to Him again and again."*

Footsteps to Mercy (pg. 31)

- Ask Our Blessed Mother to hold you close to Her Immaculate Heart when the time comes for you to experience great emotional pain. Pray this now before it happens; pray it often. Pray in your own words or you can use this prayer below from 40 Days at the Foot of the Cross (pg. 65).

"As I carry my cross and endure the sufferings that befall me, intercede for me and open my soul to the strength of your Son as it flows through your own tender heart."

- Remembering that tomorrow is not promised, freely express your love now, forgive now, spend time with your loved ones now. Live so that there will be no regrets later.

- Build a community of trusted friends around yourself as a support system.
- Jesus tells St. Faustina: ***"But understand that the strength by which you bear sufferings comes from frequent Communion. So, approach this fountain of mercy often, to draw with the vessel of trust whatever you need."*** (Diary #1487)

Matthew Kelly writes in his book 33 Days to Eucharistic Glory:
"When we receive the Eucharist, which is born from the masterclass of the Cross, we are given the grace, courage, wisdom, and fortitude to offer up our own sufferings for those we love and all in need." (pg. 117)

- Pray this prayer:
 Oh Lord,
 Help me to bless and praise you in all circumstances— even the difficult ones.
 Help me to know and trust that you are in everything and that you will draw me towards you.
- What else can you add to this list?

Closing Prayer

Creator of heaven and earth, nothing that happens escapes your knowledge. You know what makes me anxious, you know what fills me with fear and dread. You know, too, the desires of my heart. You know what I long for and what I work for. You know the outcomes I hope for.

Today, I rest in the truth that you knowing me is enough. I cannot control much, but I can choose to believe you will be with me come what may.

So, today I pray for the ability to radically accept that which I am asked to accept, knowing I am never alone. And I am always loved. Give me the strength to put you above all my worries, concerns, and losses, to surrender everything to you, and to trust you in all circumstances. Amen.