

On Dying Well, Part 3
On Suffering

My beloved Jesus
I will not refuse the cross as Simon did:
I accept it and embrace it.
I accept in particular the death that is destined for me
with all the pains that may accompany it.
I unite it to Your death
and I offer it to You.
You have died for love of me;
I will die for love of You and to please You. Help me by Your grace.

- St. Alphonsus Liguori (Fifth Station)

The Cost of Discipleship
Luke 14:25-33

²⁵ Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

The Martyrdom of Seven Brothers
2 Maccabees 7

It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and cords, to partake of unlawful swine’s flesh. ² One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, “What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers.”

³ The king fell into a rage, and gave orders that pans and caldrons be heated. ⁴ These were heated immediately, and he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of the brothers and the mother looked on. ⁵ When he was utterly helpless, the king^[a] ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and to fry him in a pan. The smoke from the pan spread widely, but the brothers^[b] and their mother encouraged one another to die nobly, saying, ⁶ “The Lord God is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us, as Moses declared in his song which bore witness against the people to their faces, when he said, ‘And he will have compassion on his servants.’”

⁷ After the first brother had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their sport. They tore off the skin of his head with the hair, and asked him, “Will you eat rather than have your body punished

limb by limb?" ⁸ He replied in the language of his fathers, and said to them, "No." Therefore he in turn underwent tortures as the first brother had done. ⁹ And when he was at his last breath, he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, ^[a] because we have died for his laws."

On Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the full payment of a debt; for that is sufficient or satisfactory to which nothing is wanting. Hence, when we speak of reconciliation to favor, to satisfy means to do what is sufficient to atone to the angered mind for an injury offered; and in this sense satisfaction is nothing more than compensation for an injury done to another. But, to come to the object that now engages us, theologians make use of the word *satisfaction* to signify **the compensation man makes, by offering to God some reparation for the sins he has committed**. -Catechism of the Council of Trent (Penance: "General Meaning of the Word Satisfaction")

Sin carries in its train two evils, the stain and the punishment. Whenever the stain is effaced, the punishment of eternal death is forgiven with the guilt to which it was due; yet, as the Council of Trent declares, the remains of sin and the temporal punishment are not always remitted. – Catechism of the Council of Trent (Penance: "Necessity of Satisfaction")

Miriam is struck with leprosy - Numbers 12:1-2, 9-15

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman; ² and they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" ...⁹ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed; ¹⁰ and when the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. ¹¹ And Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, do not ^[a] punish us because we have done foolishly and have sinned. ¹² Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb." ¹³ And Moses cried to the Lord, "Heal her, O God, I beseech thee." ¹⁴ But the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut up outside the camp seven days, and after that she may be brought in again." ¹⁵ So Miriam was shut up outside the camp seven days; and the people did not set out on the march till Miriam was brought in again. ¹⁶ After that the people set out from Haze'roth, and encamped in the wilderness of Paran.

David is punished for his sin - 2 Samuel 12:7, 9-14

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel....'You have smitten Uri'ah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uri'ah the Hittite to be your wife.' ¹¹ Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.'" ¹³ David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to

David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord,^[a] the child that is born to you shall die."

Until you have paid the last penny - Matthew 5:25-26

²⁵ Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; ²⁶ truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.

Not all sin is mortal - 1 John 5:14-17

¹⁴ And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. ¹⁶ If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God^[a] will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that. ¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.

In my flesh I complete what was lacking – Colossians 1:21-26

²¹ And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, ²³ provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. ²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations^[c] but now made manifest to his saints.

The Life and Revelations of St. Margaret of Cortona

By her confessor, Fra. Giunta Bevegnati
1247-1297

XV. "My daughter, I shall place you among the Seraphim, where are the virgins burning with charity!" Seized with terror, she answered: "How can this be, O Lord, since I am stained with so many sins?" He who made this promise by the mouth of His prophet: Turn thyself unto Me, and I will receive thee, found the humility of His fearful servant agreeable to Him. He answered thus:

"My daughter, your renewed acts of penance have so purged your soul from all stains of sin, that your contrition and your sorrow will restore you to your virginal purity."

At these words, Margaret's terror increased; she questioned her Divine Master Jesus Christ, and asked Him if He had placed Magdalen in the rank of virgins in the glory of His kingdom. This True Master answered: "After the Virgin Mary and Catherine, the Martyr, there is none above Magdalen in the choir of virgins."

XXII. After thanking Mary, who took her under her special protection, and her Son, Margaret addressed all the saints of the Eternal City, particularly Saint John the Baptist, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Francis, her father, and Saint Catherine, entreating them to pray for her. Her soul abounded in joy in this haven of happiness.

Thereupon the Most High addressed her thus: — "You would wish to be always in a state of repose and eternal peace; do you not remember what I said to you that year when you were shut up in your cell, that you should drink from the Wound on My side? Prepare yourself for the afflictions foretold to you; for the time is at hand." Margaret answered Jesus: — "O Lord, my only Hope and sure Refuge, reveal to me by Thy mercy, if the trials which thou hast foretold are in expiation of my sins, or for a renewal of grace." And our Savior: — "My daughter, by your bitter sorrow and repentance, by your many and divers afflictions, My mercy has wiped out all your past sins. Your afflictions are to-day, and shall henceforth be for you, a means of growing in grace and virtue. O My daughter, rejoice in the lot of your mother, for whom you prayed to Me. For ten years she has been in purgatory, but she is now enjoying the glory of Paradise."

Excerpts from the Autobiography of St. Gemma Galgani (1878-1903)

I began therefore, to make the Holy Hour but I felt myself so full of sorrow for my sins that it was a time of continual martyrdom. However, in the midst of this sorrow there was one comfort, namely, weeping. This was both a comfort and a relief to me. I spent the entire hour praying and weeping. Finally, being very tired, I sat down but the sorrow continued. I became entirely recollected and after a little bit, all of a sudden, I felt my strength fail. (It was only with great difficulty that I was able to get up and lock the door to the room.)

Where was I? Dear Father, I found myself before Jesus Crucified. He was bleeding all over. I lowered my eyes and the sight filled me with pain. I made the sign of the cross and immediately my anguish was succeeded by peace of soul. I continued to feel an even stronger sorrow for my sins and I had not the courage to raise my eyes and look at Jesus. I prostrated myself on the floor and remained there for several hours. **"My daughter,"** He said, **"Behold these wounds. They have all been opened for your sins. But now, be consoled, for they have all been closed by your sorrow. Do not offend me any more. Love me as I have always loved you. Love me."** This he repeated several times.

Not knowing how to love Jesus caused me much concern but he, in his infinite goodness, was never ashamed to humiliate me in order that he might become my Master. One evening when I was at prayer he came to bring peace to my soul. I felt myself entirely recollected and I found myself a second time before Jesus Crucified. He said to me: **"Look daughter, and learn how to love,"** and he showed me his five open wounds. **"Do you see this cross, these thorns, these nails, these bruises, these tears, these wounds, this blood? They are all works of love and of infinite love. Do you see how much I have loved you? Do you really want to love me? Then first learn to suffer. It is by suffering that one learns to love."**

On seeing this I experienced a new sorrow and thinking of the infinite love of Jesus for us and the sufferings he had undergone for our salvation, I fell fainting to the floor and I remained thus for several hours. All that had happened to me during these times of prayer brought me such great consolation that although they were prolonged for several hours I was not tired out.

Evening came and all of a sudden, earlier than usual, I felt an interior sorrow for my sins far deeper than I had ever experienced before. In fact, it brought me very, very close to death. After this, all the powers of my soul became recollected. My intellect could think of nothing but my sins and the offense they gave to God. My memory recalled all my sins to mind and made me see all the torments that Jesus had suffered in order to save me. And my will made me detest them and promise to be willing to suffer anything in order to expiate them. My mind was flooded with thoughts, thoughts of sorrow, of love, of fear, of hope and of comfort...

At that moment Jesus appeared with all his wounds open. But blood no longer came out of those wounds. Rather, flames as of fire issued forth from them and in a moment those flames came to touch my hands, feet and heart. I felt as if I would die. I fell to the floor. But my Mother supported me keeping me covered with her mantle. I had to remain for several hours in that position. Then the Blessed Mother kissed me on the forehead, and it all disappeared and I found myself kneeling on the floor. But I still felt an intense pain in my hands, feet and heart.

I arose to lie down on the bed and I noticed that blood was flowing from those places where I felt pain. I covered these parts as best I could and then, with the help of my angel, I was able to get in bed. These sufferings and pains, although they afflicted me, filled me with perfect peace.

Excerpts from the Autobiography of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
1647-1690

98. On one occasion when I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of Corpus Christi, a person suddenly appeared before me all enveloped in flames, the heat of which penetrated me so powerfully that I believed myself to be burning as well. The pitiable condition in which I beheld him caused me to shed an abundance of tears. He told me that he was that Benedictine monk to whom I once went to Confession, and who had ordered me to receive Holy Communion, and that, as a reward for this, God had allowed him to have recourse to me that he might obtain some alleviation in his sufferings. He asked me to apply to his soul all that I should do and suffer for three months, which I promised with the consent of my Superiors. He then went on to say that the cause of his suffering was his preferring his own interests to the glory of God, through too great attachment to his own reputation; secondly, a want of charity towards his brethren; and finally, too natural an affection for creatures, many proofs of which he had manifested in his spiritual dealings with them, thereby greatly displeasing God.

But it would be difficult for me to express what I had to suffer during those three months. For he never left me, and on the side on which he stood, I seemed to be all on fire; this caused me such intense

suffering that my tears and groans were continual. My Superior, being moved with compassion, ordered me to perform severe penances, and in particular to take the discipline, because the bodily pains and sufferings, imposed upon me through charity, greatly relieved those which this Sanctity of love inflicted upon me as a slight sample of what It causes those poor souls to endure. At the end of three months he appeared to me in a very different state; he was bathed in joy and glory, and about to be admitted into eternal bliss. He thanked me and promised to be my protector before God. I had fallen ill at the time, but as my suffering ceased with his, I soon recovered.

100. I acknowledge that I could not long have endured so painful a state, had not His loving mercy sustained me beneath the rigor of His justice. As it was, I fell ill and had great difficulty in recovering. He often placed me in this painful condition, and he once showed me the chastisement He was about to inflict on some souls; but I cast myself at His Sacred Feet saying, "O my Saviour, I beseech Thee rather to wreak Thy vengeance upon me and blot me out of the Book of Life than to permit these souls which have cost Thee so dear to perish!" And He answered: "But they love thee not and cease not to afflict thee." "It matters not, my God, provided they love Thee, I will not cease entreating Thee to pardon them." "Let Me do as I will, I can bear them no longer." Embracing Him still more closely, I replied, "No, my Lord, I will not leave Thee till Thou hast pardoned them." "I will do so," He said, "if thou wilt be surety for them." "Yes, my God, but I will pay Thee only with Thy own goods, which are the treasures of Thy Sacred Heart." Thereupon He was satisfied.

An Act of Resignation

O Lord, my God, from this day I accept from your hand willingly and with submission, the kind of death that it may please you to send me, with all its sorrows, pains, and anguish. Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with You. Amen.