

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans (*Romans 8:28*)

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Our sufferings can be turned into our good and do mighty work for God's Kingdom

God's promise: He can turn all our adversities into our good (cf. Romans 8:28). God did not promise us freedom from earthly suffering. However, from all our adversities which are accepted patiently, He can draw much good to benefit us and others. This is a tremendous promise of God, and gives us the confidence to face whatever sufferings God may send us. Though God did not raise us up for sufferings, however, no one is immune from it. Suffering enters into the human race as a result of sin which started from the Fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Like a caring parent who suffers together with the child, God suffers with us when we suffer. Sometimes, the suffering is sent from God for His divine purposes. Other times, it could be inflicted upon us by other people or ourselves. Whatever the reason for or cause of the suffering, we can lighten the load by the way we accept it. All things even the bad ones that happened to us can become a grace when it is patiently accepted out of love for God. In this way, God can work much good out of the sufferings that are accepted and surrendered to Him.

God's promise: He will be with us always (cf. Matthew 28:20). One of Christ's names is Emmanuel which means "God is with us." Though unseen, God is always present to us. We, on the other hand, are mostly absent to the Lord due to the preoccupation of the mind with something else. Additionally, out of weakness, we find ourselves being led by our senses and feelings and not by our faith. Thus, because we cannot see God nor feel His presence, we sometimes question God on His "absence" at a time when we needed Him the most. However, like a concerned mother vigilant beside the bed of a sick child, God is especially close to those who are troubled. Oftentimes, feelings are false and if not kept in rein can develop into unruly passions which can powerfully control a person's behaviour. Once we can uplift our level of consciousness to include the abiding presence of the Living God, whatever adversities or trials we have on hand will lose their ability to intimidate us. *I keep the LORD always before me; with Him at my right hand, I shall never be shaken (Psalm 16:8).* We can have real peace and security when we live in the abiding presence of the Lord.

God's promise: His grace is sufficient for us to overcome all trials. St Paul begged three times for the Lord to take away a suffering of his. But the Lord said: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The greater the trial, the greater the grace God makes available to us. God's power is in His grace. Divine grace is like the Hand of God working quietly and unseen through the power of the Holy Spirit. It strengthens the weak and makes it strong. It transforms a sinner into a saint. It enlivens the spiritually dead and gives it eternal life. It is the free gift of God that is always available to those with an open heart to receive it. Jesus said to St Faustina that the more a soul trusts in Him, the more graces the soul can receive. Trust in God is like a receptacle for receiving the graces of God.

God can use our sufferings and sacrifices, surrendered to Him, to do mighty work for His Kingdom. When Christ redeemed the world by His suffering and death on the Cross, He made holy all human sufferings especially when they are accepted and borne patiently. The salvation of souls remains the mightiest work of God and His greatest desire, and He gives us each a unique role in His plan. The apparitions of our Blessed Mother Mary in all the famous Marian shrines around the world had consistently and urgently exhorted us to offer to God more prayers, fasting and sacrifices in reparation for the unprecedented evil that is being committed in the world, to appease God's justice and to help save souls. St Paul says: *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 (Colossians 1:24).* Through Christ's redeeming act on the Cross, the gates of heaven are open to all. However, God needs our help through our prayers, sufferings and sacrifices for those unrepentant souls who reject His Hand of mercy.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, thank You for all the sufferings You sent or will send me. I know it is a little share in Your Chalice of salvation. To be like You, I must suffer with love like You. I offer to You all my sorrows and sufferings united to Your Passion on Calvary so that I can bring within Your loving Arms the souls who are most in need of Your mercy but who are too weak to turn to You. By accepting all my difficulties patiently for Your sake, I wish to show You how much I love You. I trust in You completely and I ask You to give me peace and confidence especially in times when I need it the most. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk