SUFFERING
How to Make the Greatest Evil in Our Lives Our Greatest Happiness
by Fr. Paul O'Sullivan, O.P.

Suffering is the great problem of human life. We all have to suffer. Sometimes small sorrows, sometimes greater ones fall to our share. We shall now tell our readers how to avoid much of this suffering, how to lessen all suffering and how to derive great benefits from every suffering we may have to bear.

The reason why suffering appears so hard is that, first of all, we are not taught what suffering is. Secondly, we are not taught how to bear it. Thirdly, we are not taught the priceless value of suffering. This is due to the incomprehensible neglect on the part of our teachers.

It is surprising how easily some people bear great sufferings; whereas, others get excited even at the smallest trouble.

The simple reason is that some have been taught all about suffering; others have not.

SUFFERING IS NOT THE EVIL WE THINK IT IS

First of all, then, suffering is not simply an evil, for no one suffered more than the Son of God Himself, more than His Blessed Mother or more than the Saints. Every suffering comes from God. It may appear to come to us by chance or accident or from someone else, but in reality, every suffering comes to us from God. Nothing happens to us without His wish or permission. Not even a hair falls from our heads without His consent.

Why does God allow us to suffer? Simply because He is asking us to take a little share in His Passion. What appears to come by chance or from someone else always comes because God allows it.

Every act in Our Lord's Life was a lesson for us. The greatest act in His life was His Passion. This, then, is the greatest lesson for us. It teaches us that we too must suffer.

God suffered all the dreadful pains of His Passion for each one of us. How can we refuse to suffer a little for love of Him?
SUFFERING IS THE GOLD IN OUR LIVES

Secondly, if we accept the suffering He sends us and offer them in union with His sufferings, we receive the greatest rewards. Five minutes' suffering borne for love of Jesus is of greater value to us than years and years of pleasure and joy. The Saints tell us that if we patiently bear our sufferings, we merit the crown of martyrdom.

Moreover, suffering borne patiently brings out all that is good in us. Those who have suffered are usually the most charming people.

If we bear these facts clearly in mind, it certainly becomes much easier to suffer.

GOD ALWAYS GIVES STRENGTH TO BEAR OUR SUFFERINGS

Thirdly, when God gives us any suffering, He always gives us strength to bear it, if we only ask Him. Many, instead of asking for His help, get excited and revolt. It is this excitement and impatience that really make suffering hard to bear. Consider that we are now speaking of all suffering, even the most trivial ones. All of us have little troubles, pains, disappointments, every day of our lives. All these, if borne for love of God, obtain for us, as we have said, the greatest rewards.

HOW TO BEAR SUFFERING

Even the greater sufferings that may fall to our share from time to time become easy to bear if we accept them with serenity and patience. What really makes suffering difficult to bear is our own impatience, our revolt, our refusal to accept it. This irritation increases our sufferings a hundredfold and, besides, robs us of all the merit we could have gained thereby.

We see some people pass through a tempest of suffering with the greatest calm and serenity; whereas, others get irritated at the slightest annoyance or disappointment. We can all learn this calm and patience. It is the secret of happiness.

An eminent physician, in a conference which he gave to distinguished scientists and fellow doctors, told them that he owed all his great success in life to the simple fact that he had corrected his habit of impatience and annoyance, which had been destroying all his energy and activity.

Everyone, we repeat, without exception, can learn this calm and serenity.
PENANCE

We must all do penance for our sins. If we do not, we shall have long years of suffering in the awful fires of Purgatory. This fire is just the same as the fire of Hell.

Now, if we offer our sufferings the very little ones as well as the greater ones—in union with the sufferings of Jesus Christ, we are doing the easiest and best penance we can perform. We may thus deliver ourselves entirely from Purgatory, while at the same time gaining the greatest graces and blessings.

Let us remember clearly that:

1) Sufferings come from God for our benefit.
2) When we are in the state of grace, we derive immense merit from every suffering borne patiently, even the little sufferings of our daily lives.
3) God will give us abundant strength to bear our sufferings if we only ask Him.
4) If we bear our sufferings patiently, they lose their sting and bitterness.
5) Above all, every suffering is a share in the Passion of Our Lord.
6) By our sufferings, we can free ourselves in great part, or entirely, from the pains of Purgatory.
7) By bearing our sufferings patiently, we win the glorious crown of martyrdom.

Of course, we may do all in our power to avoid or lessen our sufferings, but we cannot avoid all suffering. Therefore, it is clearly necessary for us to learn how to bear them.

In a word, we must understand clearly that if we remain calm, serene and patient, suffering loses all its sting, but the moment we get excited, the smallest suffering increases a hundredfold.

It is just as if we had a sore arm or leg and rubbed it violently; it would become irritated and painful; whereas, if we touch it gently, we soothe the irritation.

We suffer from ill-health, from pains, headaches, rheumatism, arthritis, from accidents, from enemies. We may have financial difficulties. Some suffer for weeks in their homes, some in hospitals or nursing homes. In a word, we are in a vale of tears. Almighty God could have saved us from all suffering, but He did not do so because He knows in His infinite goodness that suffering is good for us.
**PRAYER**

We have a great, great remedy in our hands, that is, prayer. We should pray earnestly and constantly, asking God to help us to suffer, to console us, or if it pleases Him, to deliver us from suffering. This is all, all important.

A very eminent doctor, in an able article he recently published in the secular press, says that "Prayer is the greatest power in the world."

He says, "I and my colleagues frequently see that many of our patients, whom we have failed to cure or whose pains we have failed to alleviate, have cured themselves by prayer. I speak now not of the prayers of holy people, but the prayers of ordinary Christians."

We should above all pray to Our Lady of Sorrows in all our troubles. We should ask her, by the oceans of sorrow she felt during the Passion of Our Lord, to help us.

God gave her all the immense graces necessary to make her the perfect Mother of God, but He also gave her all the graces, the tenderness, the love necessary to be our most perfect and loving Mother. No mother on earth ever loved a child as Our Blessed Lady loves us. Therefore, in all our troubles and sorrows, let us go to Our Blessed Lady with unbounded confidence.

**THE MEMORARE**

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother. To thee do I come, before thee I kneel, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer them. Amen.