



Teaching-on Suffering

By Kathy Nowak

I think the Lenten Season is a good time to reflect on the mystery of suffering—ours and Jesus.

God does not will suffering. He permits it in some cases to achieve a greater good, as we can see in the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. He also promises to bring good out of the sufferings of those of us who love Him.

We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his decree. Romans 8:28

Throughout Christian history there have always been those who thought suffering was sent by God to discipline or punish us; or who thought that all suffering was a “cross” we just had to bear. There even have been some (including some saints) who inflicted suffering upon themselves as a sacrifice to God.

Jesus said we all have a cross to carry. ***“If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and begin to follow in my footsteps.” Matthew 16:24***

But let us not carry crosses that God has not ordained. We all have many types of “crosses” that come into our lives, but I don’t think we should always assume that God wants us to carry them all.

I just heard someone on the radio this week praying for those who suffer from chronic pain. Instead of praying for healing for them, she prayed that they should thank God that they have been called to suffer! I tried to imagine how I would feel if I had chronic pain and someone said that to me. I just don't think that's what Jesus would say.

For instance—regarding mental or physical healing, I have not found one place in the New Testament where someone came to Jesus in faith asking for healing and Jesus said **"No; you must carry this cross."**

There may be times we are called by God to suffer for a particular reason, as was Jesus. This can only be discerned through prayer as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemani. Even Jesus asked to be spared from suffering if it was not God's Will. **(Luke 22:41-42)**

We must always remember that accidents, illnesses, and injuries can be an attack of the devil to block or keep us from doing God's Will. That's why we must always first pray against any evil influence and then pray for healing. Only then, sometimes, after we have suffered our **"Agony in the Garden"** can we discern that we have been asked to accept a **"cup of suffering"** as Jesus did for a greater good.

For me and my family, my daily prayer is, **"Lord, please protect me and my family from all suffering, except that which is necessary for our lives or for the lives of others."** In other words, I pray that God would remove all suffering from our lives that does not help us to grow in holiness or does not help others in some way.



Kathy Nowak-(on the right) is a cradle Catholic who has been ministering in the Church in many areas since she received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1975. Before the churches were shut down, she helped facilitate the Evening Bible Study group at the Church of Epiphany in Brick and served as a prayer group leader for JOY Prayer Group. She is also a member of Light of Life Prayer Group at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Toms River. She and her husband, Deacon Ron Nowak, are the parents of four children and are blessed with nine grandchildren. You can read more of her writing at www.pathwaypeace.blogspot.com.