

When I am weak, then I am strong

2 Cor 12:10b



This was the dream:

Jesus appears in the sky over my backyard. He is huge. He is welcoming. My heart leaps in my chest and I start running towards Him. My daughter follows close behind and my husband and boys follow her. Ahead of us is a structure. There are no walls, only tiers of this very fine, fragile glass. As I enter the structure, something draws me upward through the glass levels, which shatter as soon as I pass through them. Only after ascending several stories do I become aware of these tiny specks of blood that sting my face, hands, arms and legs.

The dream makes perfect sense to me. As fine as it may be, broken glass cuts. As desirous as we are of Jesus, we must suffer if we are ever to reach Him.

“... Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mt 16:24)

Theoretically, the cross makes sense to me too. Why should we be any different from the One we follow and desire to imitate? But my high-minded ideals tend to evaporate when I'm confronted by the suffering of a loved one shouldering her own cross.

The other evening, after visiting my mom in her nursing home, I gave her a hug, told her I would call her tomorrow, went down the elevator, exchanged pleasantries with the staff manning the front desk, walked out the front door pulling the mask off my face, got into my car, and burst into sobs.

This scene plays out for me several times a month. Afterwards, I am determined, by the grace of God, to go home to my husband and pick up my life as if nothing has changed.

I will continue to be a wife, mother, grandmother and fulfill those responsibilities as if the fact that my own mother is daily suffering emotional, spiritual, and psychological torment is just one more component of my day.

I can be tempted, as someone who professes deep love and devotion to the Lord, to carry my cross with a false smile that is really more of a grimace. After all, are we not called to rejoice in the Lord always, and give thanks and praise to the Lord for all things? I want to give a good witness. So, this is it:

Sometimes being a good witness means admitting our weaknesses. When I am weak, I enter into my little chapel at home where I am surrounded by the Holy Family. I fall on my knees, allow the Lord to take me into His embrace, and cry for my mother until I don't. I remember Our Lady bearing the suffering of her son. I think to myself, maybe helplessly watching a loved one's suffering is the greatest suffering of all. The Lord says to me softly, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."*

I acknowledge that the sorrow and grief I experience for my mom is real, and offer it to the Lord, uniting it with His suffering on the cross and with His Mother's anguish at His side. The pain doesn't leave me. I carry it in my heart every day, but there is this consolation: I am not alone!

I am surrounded by those who have gone before, the cloud of witnesses. I am sustained by the love of my family and friends, and by the Holy Spirit living in me. ***And I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. (2 Cor 12:9b)***



Ana María García is a Catholic lay evangelist representing Good News International. She proclaims the Gospel and witnesses to the healing power of God's love and mercy. Ana María is the mother of three children, grandmother of five, and a parishioner of the Church of St. Luke in Toms River. **"I believed; therefore, I spoke." 2 Cor 4:13**