

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Our Mission and the Fruit of Our Suffering

Tim Glemkowski

Hey guys. So we've come a long way, we've really unpacked, I think, this topic of suffering, and I hope it's been beneficial. I hope that this kind of unique way of looking at it... Like, we could have gone a lot of different directions. We could have talked about, you know, ways to defend the existence of an all-good God in the face of, you know, the fact that suffering still exists in the world; we could have just talked about, like, in general, you know, more philosophically how do we understand suffering.

But I think for the purposes of this retreat, like in the context that we're talking about, which is the reality of healing and the fact that God wants to heal, I think it was more beneficial to just focus on this specific thing of "What if when God doesn't heal? What might God be doing when there are extended situations, persistent struggles in our life? Persistent difficulties that involve suffering?" And how do we as devout Christians, as devout Catholics, how do we carry those sufferings with us so that we might grow in faith, and that we might be able to actually use... It's like what is that form of karate where you, like, use someone else's motion against them?

You know, it's like we use... suffering is attacking our wellbeing and our good, and it's painful, and it's... it is. It's what *Salvifici Doloris*: Suffering exists because evil exists. Evil in the Catholic understanding is never a positive thing that exists – I mean positive not in the sense of good but positive in the sense of like it doesn't have any actual existence – it's always just a lack of the good, it's a privation we call it. There's some good that is supposed to exist, you were supposed to be loved in a particular way, and that person didn't love you adequately and it caused you suffering. Or, you know, any other good that we're supposed to have, in not having that it causes us suffering. And so how do we use that experience, that world that we step into of pain, how do we use it positively in the spiritual life to actually help us grow, and to become more into the image and likeness of God, which is what we're called to be?

And so that's what we've kind of tried to focus from that angle. And so the first 3 reasons we gave that God might not alleviate our suffering in the moment were because He might want to call us into more intimacy and closeness, to really be His friend, to be drawn nearer to His Sacred Heart, which itself, you know, continues to suffer in a mystical way for the sins of the world. 2, so that we might be made little so that there might be a certain... like, we don't get elated, like Saint

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Paul talks about, and into spiritual pride, that we might continue to be opening and dilating to the grace of God in our lives even as we persist and grow in the spiritual life. And then 3, I'm sorry, 3, you know, it might be for the sake of preparation for mission. And our fourth reason that God might not heal, or that He might allow us to continue to suffer and we might come to find meaning and understand what the purpose of our suffering is and continue to say yes to the all-good God, who's allowing this, permitting this suffering to happen for our good; the fourth reason we're going to talk about is similar to the third.

So the third one is for preparation for our mission. So to make us more like God so that we might be able to be on mission. The fourth reason I want to give is similar, in that it might be a suffering for others or for the sake of others, but in the sense that we might be called to bear certain sufferings and offer them up for the sins of the world. So I love the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and we pray in the Divine Mercy Chaplet in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. And there have been for a long, long time in the history of the church orders of men and women who offer up their prayers and their sufferings, their, you know, asceticism for the sins of the world, like an atonement for the sins of the world. And that's always been part of the Catholic life.

I think especially in situations where people might not be open to a certain grace – maybe the grace of conversion, or just some grace that God is trying to hold out to them, or some healing He might want to do – there might be occasions – and again, this is something that must be discerned with your spiritual director – there might be occasions where the sufferings we pick up might be part of that person's salvation. It might be... we might be being permitted those sufferings for maybe people we don't even know. We might be being invited just to pray and to suffer for somebody that we're not even aware of who's out there, closed off to the divine life and to grace. Or it might be someone close.

There was a time where I was reflecting with a spiritual director that there was a suffering going on in my life, and I told my spiritual director, I was like “This is the weirdest thing. Like, I don't know why I have this sense, but I feel like I'm being asked to carry this suffering for a family member,” who had a similar suffering going on in their life. “Like, I feel like I'm being invited in a certain sense into this whole situation.” And my spiritual director said that might be the case. Like, you might be, you know, offered, be able to offer your suffering for the sake of somebody else, to make... maybe they're carrying, you know, almost like a certain sense like Jesus, you know, on the way to the cross, and Simon the Cyrenian comes and carries His cross with Him. You know, we might be able to do that in our charity out of love of others.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

So this might be something God is inviting us into. The suffering too, it might be, the way that we're being invited to carry it for others, might actually be just in the sense of, like for the sake of the world, or as, like, a witness to the love of Christ. You know, we talked about preparation for mission, but it also might be just that when people carry their suffering a certain way, it speaks to the fact that God is real. It's a witness to the fact that God exists. So I think of... there's the story of Peter the Pope and his martyrdom, and famously we know that Peter is crucified upside down, like we're told through tradition, because he doesn't feel worthy to be crucified, like, to be killed, martyred in the same way that Jesus was. He doesn't feel worthy of that, which is just beautiful, right. So he asked to be crucified... for them to crucify him upside down.

Before that story, there's a famous encounter that Jesus has, or that Peter has where he's actually leaving Rome. He's aware that his, you know, martyrdom is imminent, and he wants to escape from the persecution that's found in Rome. And as he walked – and we commemorate the spot where this happened actually in the church, like we still have this, I think it's along the Appian Way leading out of Rome, don't quote me on that. And Peter is leaving Rome, and Jesus appears to him and He's walking back toward Rome. And Peter very famously says to Jesus “Quo vadis, domine?” which in Latin means “Lord, where are You going? Lord, where are You going?” And Jesus reveals to Peter, tells Peter that He's actually returning to Rome to be crucified again because Peter refused to be, right.

And so there's just an incredibly beautiful, you know, kind of lesson in there for us, that Peter had done incredible things as Pope, he had really already, you know, been about the mission of the church, had preached and had pastored and had done incredible things, and no matter what he was going to be a beautiful witness to the love of God. Like, he had already fulfilled his mission in many ways, even, you know, biblically, in the stories of him and his denial of Jesus, and then the redemption that happened on the shores of the sea of Galilee, like, right, all of it. But there's still a further mission that Peter has to undergo, like it has to be part of the story of the first pope, the witness of his life to Jesus that he's martyred in this way. Like, this is God's plan for him.

Because for centuries, I can tell you this story now. Like, right. Like, I can tell you that this first pope we had, like, he was martyred in this incredible way, upside down, he didn't feel worthy, like it was a beautiful... it was part of God's plan for his life. And Peter needed to die that way for me, right, so that, like, I can believe more, like have further confidence in this church that I'm a part of, right, and for you. Do you see what I mean? Like, even though Peter didn't recognize that in some way the suffering he was about to undergo was for the sake of others, in a very real way it was, right. And Peter so famously turns around. “Quo vadis,

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

domine?” “I’m going to Rome to be crucified because you won’t be,” and Peter turns around and he goes and is killed then, right, in his persecution.

So this is the fourth reason that I’m going to offer to you. So not just in preparation for our mission, but actually for others, maybe in atonement for their sins. Maybe you have a family member or a loved one who’s far from Jesus and these sufferings can be an occasion for grace. Because I think when we encounter suffering, this isn’t the crux of the Christian life hits. Like it’s easy to be a Christian when everything is going great, and maybe you were just recently kind of following Christ, and you have all of these just consolations, and you’re seeing this new way of living, and it’s amazing, and it’s so easy to follow Jesus.

But, like, the real Christians, like, the real Catholics, where it hits is when we encounter these situations of suffering and, like, we don’t know what to do. We’re just... we feel lost and abandoned. Like, that’s when it really, like, the rubber hits the road. That’s when saints are made. Do you know what I mean? That’s when saints are made. It’s okay to be a good person, but if you want to be a saint then we have to walk the road of crucifixion that we walk. We have to go back into Rome, right.

And so maybe it is. Maybe it’s for the sake of just the world, just corporately, like kind of like those nuns, those cloistered nuns who were offering their sacrifices in atonement for the sins of the world. Maybe that’s just, like, kind of in a general sense as these, you know, we step into the divine plan for all of humanity and just kind of choosing to offer up our suffering this way. Maybe it’s more specific for a family member or a friend who has maybe fallen away or is undergoing some suffering in their own sense, and we can suffer with them. Or maybe it’s just as like a witness to the love of Christ. But either way, sometimes that can be a really beautiful thing, because in our suffering we turn inward. Like we tend to become focused on ourselves, and maybe that can be a really beautiful way to recognize that our suffering might actually be pushing us outward. That it might be this occasion to offer up what’s going on in our lives for others in their relationship with Christ, in order to grow in holiness.

So, I really hope that these reflections have been helpful in terms of just kind of unpacking the reality of suffering. I do, I think it’s important to say, like we said at the beginning: God wants to heal. But God also wants us to be saints. And really, there is no escaping this world. I think so many forms of spirituality sometimes can be about escapism, and I think the people who are the greatest saints, like the holiest people that I know are distinctly human. Like they don’t attempt to flee from reality, but rather their Catholicism pushes them deeper into reality. They

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

become more human, more of what they were made to be, and more in touch with the world, even its pain.

And I think the key for all of us is, in the midst of our suffering, to not allow for it to make us bitter, to stay open to the divine life, and to grace, and to others, and to loving others. There's nothing worse, right, than someone who clearly loves the Lord, who's very devout, maybe they even go to daily mass, but you can just tell that the sufferings of life have ground them down and made them bitter. Versus the people you hear about, the great saints like Mother Teresa, whose suffering throughout the years didn't make her bitter, didn't make her angry at God, or angry at others, or people don't understand how much she's going through, or, you know, they, like, you know, other people are... you know what I mean? All the narratives that we develop in our heads when we suffer, about how nobody understands and really appreciate kind of all that we're undergoing.

I think if we can remember these 4 points, if we can remember what Viktor Frankl said, that in spite of this, in spite of everything, life, you know, saying yes to life, that life is still worth living. *Man's Search for Meaning*. I think if we can remember that that's there, and if we can hold on to these 4 things that God might be doing in the midst of our lack of healing and in our suffering, I think that can help us to not become bitter Christians, to not become bitter Catholics, but to be joyful witnesses to the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The greatest evil in the history of the world, the actual killing of God was the occasion for our salvation. So let's close in prayer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus, I commend to You all that are going to watch this video as part of this retreat, and I just ask that You walk with them, and that You show them the meaning in their suffering, what You're doing and accomplishing in it, and that You open their hearts and dilate their hearts to become the reeds of God, so that Your divine life might be poured out through them into the world, and that our sufferings might help us to bear fruit and to be witnesses to Your truth and to Your love.

And we'll pray all together a Memorare, which is this commitment of us, even in the midst of our difficulties, to Our Lady as we pray. *Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, our mother; to thee do we come, before thee we stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer us. Amen. Saint John Paul the Second, pray for us; Saint Mother Teresa, pray for us. Amen.*

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Good being with you. God bless you. *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*