

Elements of Devotion to
the Flame of Love of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary
Embracing Suffering and Other
Sacrifices

Why All The Suffering?!

- “The devotion is great but I don’t get all the suffering”
- I had missed the single largest topic in the Diary!
- p87: Jesus: “You suffer, do you not? Suffer for Me. This is My gift. You can only receive suffering like this from Me. Whether the suffering is spiritual or bodily, accept it from pure love for Me. You know what I told you: We must go up to Calvary. May our feet journey together. And if you are feeling alone, I permit it only so that you receive merits that you can offer for your faults and for souls consecrated to Me.
 - Do not be frightened by the suffering that frequently comes upon your soul. I do this to get you accustomed to sufferings. By these, we walk together and gather together.”

Why All The Suffering?!

- p38: Mary: To receive great graces, your soul must be prepared by greater sufferings. This is the only way to increase grace in your soul. . . . This test [attacks from Satan] was an opportunity to gain merits for others. Make constant sacrifices for the twelve priests because they, too, will suffer. Be happy that you can suffer with them.”
- p40: Mary: “Just live in hidden humility and be consumed in suffering. I, the Mother of Sorrows, feel as if, with each of your sufferings, you pour medicinal balm upon the wounds of my Divine Son.
 - Be a soul which cannot live without sufferings. By their union with the sufferings of my Divine Son, these souls increasingly feel His closeness. Desire with all your heart that my Flame of Love be lit quickly and blind Satan.”

Why All The Suffering?!

- p97: Jesus: “My little one, did I send you many sufferings in these past few days? I implore you, do not grow weary of these great pains. Endure them for your family and those of the whole country. You know that Satan, foaming with rage, wants to destroy families. Let us suffer together. I suffer united to you and you to Me. I love you very much and I will not leave you without sufferings. Embrace suffering. Love only Me, serve Me with fidelity, and do not be surprised that I always manifest My love through sufferings.
 - The excessive love of My Heart makes Me consider you worthy of sufferings. This is the only way you can save many souls. You are a mother of a family and you are aware of the several forms of family disintegration. To save families, throw yourself into the furnace of suffering. Oh, how much sinning is done against Me by destroyed families! Make reparation and suffer for them. Do not lose the least opportunity. May our thoughts be in unison. Consider clearly the value of your sufferings. The number of those reaping with Me is so small. Do you know why? Because there are no souls willing to bear sufferings, especially those who would do it steadily. Without it, they cannot merit that I shower My graces on them continuously.”

Love and Suffering

- We are coming to perhaps the highest hill of the devotion
 - N.B. it isn't "endure" or "survive" suffering but "embrace" suffering
 - Nothing new – James 1:2
- Perhaps the most important as it puts all the "practices" in context
- To understand the role of suffering, we must understand love
- We can't understand the Flame of Love unless we understand love
- We so misunderstand love!!
 - We spent a year on this in the Foundations of Bible Study series
 - Super condensed version
- The Rom 8:7 challenge – Why not?
 - Boil it down – Matt 22:36-40, Rom 13:10
 - Do only Christians love?
- The linchpin scripture – Phili 2:3-8 (NASB)

God's Selfless Love Versus Human Love

- Two ends in life – Love and Self
 - The opposite of Love is Self
- The World misunderstands love – self-fulfillment vs. self-sacrifice
 - The romantic dinner
 - The one is sustainable; the other isn't
- We must repent not only of our overt evil but of most of our good
 - If we love “because”, it is not God's love
 - Because:
 - I want to get to Heaven
 - I want to be happy
 - I receive more than I give

Christians Also Misunderstand Love

- “I love them with ‘Christian love’”
- “Love is an action and not an emotion”
- That’s responsibility, not love
- Jesus didn’t say serve your enemies but love your enemies (Matt 5:44)
- Jesus thirsts for, seeks, and gives His life for the terrorists, the pedophiles, the drug lords, the gang members, the rapists
 - Do we?
- Forgiveness is essential for eternity in Heaven
 - Will we meet our abuser?
 - We must forgive not to be forgiven but for love of them (Matt 18:34)
 - “I can’t! I just can’t” - I know; it’s impossible

The Impossibility of God's Selfless Love

- Conundrum in the prayer closet
 - I want to be selfless for totally selfish reasons!
- We can't; we call that original sin – the way we are – our nature
- That's why we need a Savior
 - A Savior is someone who saves us from an overwhelming power
- Christianity isn't a religion – not about doctrine or knowledge
- Christianity is a miracle – the transformation of the very nature of what we are from human to divine (II Peter 1:4)
 - we call that sanctifying grace

How God Makes The Impossible Possible

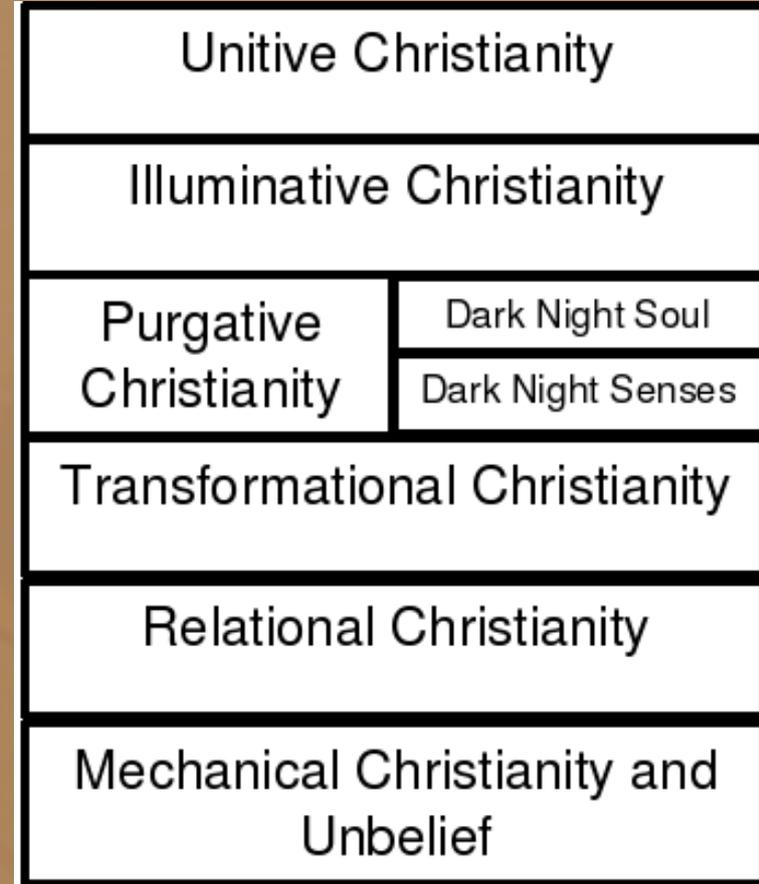
- The transforming of our natures from human to divine is the role of the Holy Spirit – Titus 3:5-7
- The Holy Spirit makes us capable of loving as God loves – Rom 5:2-5
 - The Glory of God – Eph 3:19 – filled with all the fullness of God, Col 1:27, I John 3:22
- Why? So we can love God and each other with the same love God has loved within Himself for all eternity
 - So that we are capable of inhabiting eternity
 - Selfish love is not sustainable

Love, Freedom, and Suffering

- How does the Holy Spirit transform us? I Cor 2:9-11
 - Hearing in stereo! Which voice is God's?
 - The one that leads to love rather than self
- Thus we no longer love “because” but simply because we are love (I John 4:8)
- This is how we love all including those who hurt us
 - This is how we inhabit Heaven
- Love, Freedom, and Suffering are inseparable
 - For love to be perfect, it must be perfectly free
 - The freedom of love is built in the crucible of suffering
- Year long study – Foundations of Bible Study series
 - <http://www.elmontbiblestudy.org/foundations/>

The Levels of Christian Growth

- Deep topic so let's take another approach
- Our understanding of Christianity is sometimes woefully immature
- Levels of Christian Growth
- Foundations Series focused on Transformational Christianity
- Flame of Love takes us straight to Purgative Christianity and beyond
- The *experience* of Purgation brings us to Illumination
 - We see by experience, not knowledge



Rocket To Sanctity

- Can we see the wonder of what Mary is doing in the Flame of Love?
- She is rocketing us to the life of heavenly holiness on Earth
 - The greatest outpouring of grace and the blinding of Satan
 - A key to taking this from just another beautiful Marian devotion to the rocket ride to holiness is this element – embracing suffering
 - Why? Because love is learned by experience more than knowledge and the experience of embraced suffering teaches true love
- In this life, Love, Freedom, and Suffering are inseparable
 - That's why a loving God placed us in a suffering world

God For a Day

- If we were God for a day, what would we change?
 - End war? Domestic violence? Take away all sickness and suffering?
- Isn't that telling God that we know how to do His job better than He does?
 - The world is exactly the way it needs to be today
 - It does not need to be this way tomorrow
- For God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist - Saint Augustine - Enchiridion ch.8
- So let's see if we can understand why God does not remove all suffering from the world
- Let's see if we can embrace the plan steeped in suffering

Salvific Suffering

- God ordained suffering to be salvific so we can learn the love of God necessary for an eternal existence by experience in our bodies
- It is a gift
 - Saint Faustina, Divine Mercy in My Soul, 1804:
”If the angels were capable of envy, they would envy us for two things: one is the receiving of Holy Communion, and the other is suffering.”
- When we understand the gift of suffering, we are ready to understand the indispensable role of embracing our suffering in the Flame of Love devotion

Embracing Suffering and The Flame of Love

- Perhaps the most emotionally challenging element
- The one that brings us to the deepest trust in God's love for us
- The greatest proof to ourselves and others that we love as God loves
- The way that builds the permanence of our love
 - p87: Jesus: “You suffer, do you not? Suffer for Me. This is My gift. You can only receive suffering like this from Me. Whether the suffering is spiritual or bodily, accept it from pure love for Me. You know what I told you: We must go up to Calvary. May our feet journey together. And if you are feeling alone, I permit it only so that you receive merits that you can offer for your faults and for souls consecrated to Me.
 - Do not be frightened by the suffering that frequently comes upon your soul. I do this to get you accustomed to sufferings. By these, we walk together and gather together.”
 - p47: The spiritual dryness had lasted for so long and my misery had kept me tied to the ground. I accepted this willingly because it was for the good of my soul.
 - James 1:2-4

Seeking Suffering and Sacrifices

- Suffering is something to be sought for ourselves and alleviated for others
 - p97: Jesus: “My little one, did I send you many sufferings in these past few days? I implore you, do not grow weary of these great pains. Endure them for your family and those of the whole country. You know that Satan, foaming with rage, wants to destroy families. Let us suffer together. I suffer united to you and you to Me. I love you very much and I will not leave you without sufferings. Embrace suffering. Love only Me, serve Me with fidelity, and do not be surprised that I always manifest My love through sufferings.
 - The excessive love of My Heart makes Me consider you worthy of sufferings. This is the only way you can save many souls. You are a mother of a family and you are aware of the several forms of family disintegration. To save families, throw yourself into the furnace of suffering. Oh, how much sinning is done against Me by destroyed families! Make reparation and suffer for them. Do not lose the least opportunity. May our thoughts be in unison. Consider clearly the value of your sufferings. The number of those reaping with Me is so small. Do you know why? Because there are no souls willing to bear sufferings, especially those who would do it steadily. Without it, they cannot merit that I shower My graces on them continuously.”

Seeking Suffering and Sacrifices

- P40: ANNOUNCE MY MERCY – SACRIFICE YOURSELF

- Jesus: “I choose you, My little one, to be the bearer of My Divine Mercy. Fill yourself with the abundance of My Divine Mercy and when you open your mouth to speak, proclaim the mercy of My Heart burning with desire for sinners. Let your whole life be a burning desire to take part in My work of Redemption through prayer, sacrifice, and desire.”
- “. . . serve Me with greater surrender. Do not let the power of routine take control.
- Let your sacrifices always be fervent. I would like to increase my graces in you. However, to do that, I need greater acceptance of sacrifices. Accept My plea, be very humble and renounce every pleasure which does not serve Me. . . .
- I want you to increase your fasts if you accept. Do not give yourself to any pleasure. Let your breakfast and your afternoon meal be bread and water. You can have other foods only at your principal meal, but make them tasteless. Do not eat to please your taste but only to nourish your body.”

- Phili 3:8-11

Seeking Suffering and Sacrifices

- We seek sacrifices even to the point of creating our own
 - p58: Mary: “My little Carmelite, intensify your desire so that my Flame of Love will be put into action. Make even greater sacrifices.”
 - It is with these very words that she spoke to me. She also repeated them on the feast of her Visitation.
 - Mary: “Offer me greater sacrifices. Do not ask how, just improvise!”
 - Because of her request, I ate only bread and water and a little fruit for nine days. When she asked a second time, I deprived myself of water on various days.
 - Experiment, learn by doing
 - We may make mistakes
 - Showers, Floor

Seeking Suffering and Sacrifices

- We don't run away from them – we run into them
 - “When the world was hushed to silence at the turning-point of night, Lord, your almighty Word leapt down from the royal throne” – Advent and Christmas antiphon
 - What did Jesus leap into?
 - Poverty, Infanticide, Refugee, Calvary
 - Are we ready to leap from our place of comfort into the salvation of the world?
 - “Your all-powerful word from heaven's royal throne leapt into the doomed land” – Wis 19:15 NABRE
 - p71: Mary: “My Divine Son unites your humiliations to His sufferings, which are of eternal value. And now, prepare your soul and body for still greater sufferings, in whatever way and measure they come upon you. Do not retreat, be humble, patient and persevering.”
 - When the Blessed Virgin said this, a great anguish oppressed my heart. She had announced at other times that I would suffer. However, this time I trembled within...
 - “My beloved Jesus and loving Mother, I have great fear concerning the sufferings and humiliations that you warn me about. Without you, I am nothing. Hold me tightly.”

Seeking Suffering and Sacrifices

- We do not just endure sufferings; we embrace them – James 1:2
 - p266: NOVEMBER, MONTH OF THE SUFFERING SOULS - November 1-2, 1965
 - The Lord Jesus flooded me with extraordinary sufferings which grew greater at night. I was bent over when I walked. Also, a fear of death took hold of me. I had never experienced this in all my life.
 - The next morning, I felt a relief which increased throughout the day. Suddenly, the Lord Jesus spoke again.
 - Jesus: “My Soul, do you believe that I love you very much? I used this violent suffering which you have endured for the suffering souls. Now, I smile upon you.”
 - At that moment, I felt as if my soul separated from my body. The Lord Jesus spoke again.
 - Jesus: “God smiles upon you. You see, with My divine smile, you can easily endure the great and violent sufferings. The souls in purgatory need your sufferings so much because you now share in the work of the Church Suffering. Suffer with a smile! Let no one know, let no one see, this is a secret between the two of us. Only God grants this and I give it only to the souls who know how to endure ceaseless sufferings with a smile.”
- Suffering is a gift – Phili 1:29

Embracing Suffering And Grace

- p38: Mary: To receive great graces, your soul must be prepared by greater sufferings. This is the only way to increase grace in your soul. . . . This test [attacks from Satan] was an opportunity to gain merits for others. Make constant sacrifices for the twelve priests because they, too, will suffer. Be happy that you can suffer with them.”
- P123: Jesus: “Your great and violent sufferings have exhausted you. Why are you surprised? Did I not prepare you for this? Beforehand, I gave you great graces. These gave you strength for the great sufferings, and now, because you have endured these great sufferings, I can fill you with a greater abundance of grace. Each time, I multiply and intensify these great sufferings in your soul. Then I strengthen you with the grace of perfect abandonment so we both have success. The rage of Satan is savage. I permit him to be unchained against you so he can see how great is the power of My grace in a soul that is abandoned to Me.”
- Job - Job feared rather than loved God – Job 1:4-6, 3:25
 - His great suffering corrected his distorted relationship with God – Job 42:5-6

Embracing Suffering And Grace

- p131: Jesus: “Although I will intensify and increase your sufferings, I will also add a grace to strengthen you and give you courage. I see that you make good use of the grace of abandonment. Try never to lose this wonderful grace which completely dominates your soul. Make every effort to use it in all that follows. Satan knows it very well, and he wholeheartedly wants to divest you of this grace. It is I who permitted this for him to see what surrendering to Me can produce in the soul.”
- p179: Jesus: “To you! What will I not grant to you! As you have asked, I will increase My graces. Through your sufferings, you have widened your soul. Now, everything I want to give you fits in your soul. Each sacrifice is a new bank deposit in Heaven that you will bring with you. Through Me, the multitude of souls will receive its interest after your death.”

Embracing Suffering And Grace

- p234: Jesus: “The water of My graces, like a stream, flows continually into your soul. Now is the moment to tell you why these abundant graces remain in your soul. By your sacrifices, you have dug a deep channel and the water of My divine graces, with its purifying power, has found a place in your soul. If you had not prepared this deep channel by your sacrifices, the purifying water of My graces would have drained off.
 - Do not grow angry, My Elizabeth, if I want to console you but that My words end up as complaints. This does not come from Me, your understanding heart leads Me to complain. Oh, how many, many souls receive My abundant graces, but they are not prepared, and the purifying water of My love drains out. Their souls lose this grace. How this hurts Me! But I will stop complaining because I must strengthen and prepare you for the battles that await you. The water of My graces have found rest in the channel of your soul. So now, the drops of oil squeezed from your sufferings float on top of the fountain of My graces. See how your drops of oil are shining upon the mirror of silvery water! They shine like pure gold.”
- p42: Jesus: “My little Carmelite, you have accepted all the sacrifices that I have asked for lately. Perhaps you are surprised but I must thank you. Do you see how your Master is so condescending? Yet, I will go still further. Unite your sufferings totally with Mine. Then your merits will grow greatly and they will move My redemptive work ahead. Keep this great grace you have received from Me in the depth of your soul. It is a special gift from God. He honors you, poor little soul. Can he give you anything more sublime? Learn from Me. I chose you because you are small and miserable. Never tire of suffering for Me. With the help of My grace, dedicate yourself even more.”

How Does Grace Enable Embracing Suffering?

- Because it makes us think, feel, act, and be like God
 - P97: He promised to give me special strength for every trial and told me to keep trying.
 - Jesus: “The main thing is to fight continually.”
 - Although He spoke of many things, I could not record them all. Experiencing such goodness, my heart was moved. I said to the Lord Jesus: “My Jesus, You know that my soul is ready, but my flesh is weak.” He filled my soul with the strength of His grace. Then He spoke to me, just as we humans speak to each other.
 - Jesus: “You see My riches. I need you and I enrich you. Therefore, may our hands gather in unity since our thoughts are one and our souls are in harmony.
 - You can see how intimate our prayer is. My little one, when I will be able to speak with many, My complaining words will be less frequent. I ask you to take advantage of every opportunity to ask our heavenly Father that more would know Me. For many, this is not easy, but they will experience difficulty only until they get very close to Me. Once they are beside Me, all will be easy because love makes sacrifices easy to bear.” - James 1:2

How Does Grace Enable Embracing Suffering?

- Trying to protect ourselves because of a lack of humility blinds us to the power of suffering
 - p153: Jesus: “All of you must discard your false humility that keeps you away from Me. I say this because you stay far from Me by claiming that you are not worthy. Really, your sins cause you to starve for My love. So, make yourselves worthy by repentance. To you, I say: Suffer for them, especially when the suffering seems so dark. Let all come to Me with confidence. Suffering is dark only when you are close to earth. My little one, are you beginning to understand?
 - At your birth, I wrote about suffering in the story of your life and I will continue to write it until your final day. But I give the light of My grace so you can see its value. The closer you come to Me, the more I will enlighten you with My brightness. When you arrive in Heaven before the Most Blessed Trinity, you will see the value of your sufferings that will last forever and never become obscure. There, I will reveal them to you like a movie, filled with merits and wonders. This transformation united with My merits and the Spirit’s illumination will plunge your soul into the most beautiful ecstasy.”

Love And Humility Make Sense of Suffering

- Forsaking self and loving other – true sanity
- We learn this love by experience
 - p277: Jesus: “Look, the Word became Flesh.”
 - No matter what I tried, I was not able to grasp the significance. The Lord Jesus drew my attention to this reality. “Even now, adorable Jesus, I cannot grasp this miracle.” The Lord Jesus continued:
 - Jesus: “I am not surprised, My little one. I reassure you, no one has understood this great miracle until now except My Mother; for to understand it, it is necessary to accept suffering also. It is only through suffering that the soul can understand the great miracle of the Incarnation of the Word. Through the consummation of the sacrifice, will be clarified in your soul what I did for you, for all.”
 - Eph 3:19
 - We are not ready for Heaven until we willingly embrace the voluntary poverty of the Incarnation and the voluntary suffering of the Cross

Love And Humility Make Sense of Suffering

- This is why the Purgative phase comes before the Illuminative phase
 - p279: Jesus: “Do you wonder how you can see and comprehend the divine mysteries with so much clarity? Only can see them is the one whose sight is one with My divine gaze, and whose thought is one with My thoughts. My Elizabeth, many of the divine mysteries you’ve been experiencing on account of my divine clarity in periods of ecstasy, strengthen you across the suffering that you must bear for the salvation of souls. I know you suffer with joy and I will continually strengthen your availability for sacrifices since I know you will need it and those I have sent you to, with respect to our holy communications. You must make sacrifices on their behalf.