



Luke 9:22-25

Jesus said to his disciples, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, you did not flee before suffering, but did what your love for us told you to do. I trust in you. Lord Jesus, you went towards Jerusalem in the hope that we would return to the Father's home. I hope in you, for you did not put a limit on your love. Even when you were rejected and put to death by your enemies, you prayed for them. Lord, I love you.

Petition: Lord, help me to see the redeeming power of the cross you have laid on my shoulders and embrace it.

1. Suffering is an Opportunity: Suffering is present at every turn of life. Our tendency is to flee from it, to avoid it. This holds true from the small scratch we get when we first fall off our bicycle to the profound sorrow we feel when a friend betrays us. When we feel pain, we take every means in our power to get rid of it. In today's society, there is a medicine to alleviate any pain or suffering we might feel. Yet, in every suffering there is a lesson, and we remember the lesson better when we have suffered to learn it. Christ foresaw his rejection, suffering, and death, yet did not flee them. He embraced them as a way of showing his most profound love: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). It is what parents do when they give their children their time and attention. It is what real friends do when they serve without counting the cost. It is what we do when we help someone in need.

2. Love the Fight Not the Fall: Sometimes we may feel overwhelmed. Slowly but surely, we may tire of our defects and their effects. The constant, on-going battle to follow Christ may slowly wear us down. The path to perfection in the

virtues is surely full of rewards, but it has its share of wear-and-tear. But it does not matter if we fall a thousand times, as long as we love the fight and not the fall. It therefore makes no sense to despair, especially when we fight with Christ on our side. The effort of a prolonged battle can please Christ more than an easy and comfortable victory. Christ reminds us: He will suffer greatly, be rejected and killed, and everyone who wants to be his disciple must take up his cross and follow him.

3. When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong: With the coming of Christ on the earth, suffering took on a new meaning. He gave us the possibility to give to suffering, illness and pain—the consequences of sin—the redemptive and salvific meaning of love. When the apostles asked our Lord who was responsible for the misfortune of a man blind from birth, Christ answered: “Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him” (John 9:3). Misfortune and weaknesses made St. Paul exclaim: “Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). It is through denial of self, through the recognition of our weakness, through willfully embracing our trials and sufferings, that we can show the strength of God and the wonders of God in our life.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, help me to see all that happens to me, even pain, suffering and illness, as an opportunity to love, grow in love and offer you my love.

Resolution: Before doing something today I will pause to examine the motives for which I do it: is it for me or for God? If it is only for me, I will rectify my intentions or leave the deed aside, especially if I have the opportunity to do something else for God or to serve God in my neighbor.