

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*I hear many fears from people.*

*What happens if the democrats win the election and control congress?*

*Will the church suffer a schism after the synod if pope Francis approves homosexuality, changes the catechism, ordains women as deacons, and on?*

*Fear is the first of the irascible passions which move a person to protect himself from a perceived danger in the future.*

*What the Christian must do is to bring that fear to prayer to see if it be a reasonable one, and with God's help not to let the fear overwhelm the joy or control the person's life, that is not to let it become a paralyzing phobia that blinds one to the joy of life with Jesus.*

*Few people like suffering. I used to joke that my greatest fear was to be lying on the couch with a drink, watching my football team up by only 28 points with 2 minutes left to go in the game.*

*Over time I have come to see that I cannot control so many things, and yes, if certain events unfold, I will suffer more in the world in which I have a hope for **reasonable moments of happiness**. <http://richardperozich.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/reasonablyhappy.pdf>*

*So I set my hope on the **eternal happiness** and the way I can enjoy it as much as possible, WITH SUFFERING in this world, by experiencing the love of God for me, the sacraments, the bible, charity, and doing what I can even when the consequences may be a worldly punishment for doing good.*

# **Suffering: The Gospel of Life Within You**

**JOSEPH HOLLCRAFT AND RUTH BERGHORST**



“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” This iconic phrase was a key part of President Roosevelt’s inaugural speech to the nation after winning the 1932 presidential election against Herbert Hoover. It was the height of the Great Depression.

**Fear remains a prevailing force in our lives**, much like it did in the ancient days of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When the serpent tempted Eve to eat from the forbidden tree, fear was introduced. Adam and Eve, having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, experienced shame and fear upon realizing their nakedness and their transgression of God’s command.

**We hold fears of various kinds: political, ideological, physical, and sometimes even religious. The media excels at fueling our apprehensions about ongoing crises by stoking our fears.** Be it war and famine, societal divisions causing social unrest, escalating

inflation, human trafficking, immigration, or mental health issues—the list is extensive.

### ***Why do crises and fear dominate us so?***

**Crises frequently lead to uncertainty about what lies ahead. While our minds desire predictability and control, the face of the unknown can provoke anxiety and fear. We long to grasp what lies ahead, as though we possess a divine right to foresee the future.**

**Often, this perceived “right” is deeply rooted in the wish to escape suffering. We become fixated on the belief that control over the uncontrollable can spare us from pain.** However, our repeated attempts to seize control resemble grasping at voids. So, how do we address the suffering that is personal, local, or global? Is the essence of life to evade suffering?

**Sacred Scripture assures us of many things, notably that suffering is an inevitable part of life. It is not something to be feared; instead, we are encouraged to find joy in and wholeheartedly accept it. Rom 5:3 tells us:**

*More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Saint Paul did not err; Luke reaffirms the same principle: “Through many tribulations, we must enter the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

**For many, joy grows as suffering diminishes. However, for Christian's *conscious of God's glory*, joy, which is a fruit of abiding in the Holy Spirit, escalates as suffering remains.** This paradox is accessible only to those deeply aware of God's magnificent presence, as stated in 1 Peter 2:19. This fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10), even of wisdom concerning our suffering. We find joy in suffering only when we suffer redemptively through self-sacrifice and persecution.

In Scripture, we are reminded that suffering, when embraced with faith and offered to God, can possess a redemptive quality (see Col. 1:24). In uniting our own suffering with that of Jesus on the cross, we partake in the redemptive mission of Christ. Suffering is a part of the Christian path because it sculpts us more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus, who passed into glory via the cross!

Up and down the centuries, from Guadalupe, Mexico to Pontmain, France; from Lourdes to Fatima; and from Zaitun, Egypt to Kibeho, Rwanda, Mary has been echoing this same truth: suffering is a chisel that forms us into the image of her Son.

In these sacred places of private revelation, the Virgin Mary shows us that one of the secrets to taking up our cross and unlocking the mystery of suffering is in the encounter. If we focus on the suffering, we balk; if we focus on encountering Jesus, we pursue God's will swiftly and without hesitation. This pursuit begins with a repentant heart. Without repentance there is no gospel life within you!

In her appearances, the Blessed Virgin Mary has been echoing the gospel: "repent and believe the good news." In Greek, repentance means a departure from sin and a turning

towards Christ—a shift from something (sin) to Someone (Jesus). When we turn to Christ, we clearly see the suffering Christ on the Cross.

With this new line of sight, the soul starts to perceive suffering as an integral part of the Christian calling. It's important to recognize that we cannot offer a gift to God unless it has been wholly embraced by the heart. A repentant heart is an open heart, and an open heart is more inclined to give generously! In this instance, it's the offering of one's heart, now united with Christ.

*Editor's Note: The authors' book [Contemplating the Seven Sorrows of Mary: A Chaplet with St. Alphonsus Liguori](#) is available for preorder from [Sophia Institute Press](#).*

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