

THE AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE AND THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS PRESENT

The Heart of Prayer

A Study with
Bishop Andrew Cozzens

The Thank Offering,
William-Adolphe Bouguereau / Restored Traditions

GROWING IN PRAYER THROUGH SUFFERING

SESSION 8

Opening Prayer

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.

—*Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

Study Goals

Suffering is one of the most difficult realities we face in our lives and in our prayer. It forces us to confront the reality of our limits, the broken and fallen world in which we live, and the question of why God allows suffering to occur. We often don't see the value in suffering, but some of the greatest joys in life come through suffering, especially through suffering as a result of self-gift. Real love is self-gift, and real joy comes from giving ourselves to another in love; this is how we can experience great joy even through suffering.

One of the mysteries of the Christian faith is that Jesus did not take away suffering; Jesus did, however, save us from death and reclaimed suffering by making it the way of love. Uniting our suffering to the suffering of Christ on the cross allows us an opportunity to be a part of redemption. In this way, sacrifice and suffering become life-giving and fruitful for the world. This way of suffering is not reserved for the holiest saints, but is meant to be embraced in the ordinary trials of daily life.

Transforming our suffering into an opportunity to love requires us to know, first, that we are loved. This allows us to avoid turning inward on ourselves and falling victim to the danger of acedia, which is a deep form of spiritual desolation and a sadness toward spiritual goods. Acedia, or sloth, can make it difficult to pray, which in turn requires us to recommit more intentionally to prayer during this time, especially using the ARRR formula.

Scripture

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.



Detail from *Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles*,
Dirck van Baburen / Restored Traditions

Discuss

1. What is your first response to trial or suffering? Do you run from it, attempt to numb it, or do you embrace it?
2. When have you experienced a deeper union with Christ as a result of suffering? What was that experience like?
3. Reflect on the final story Bishop Cozzens shared about Fernando. What emotions did this evoke inside you? What experiences in your own life did you recall as you heard that story? What did it reveal to you about your relationship with Jesus?

Memory Verse

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.”

—2 Corinthians 4:8–10

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, through your grace help us to follow the example of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who joyfully united her sufferings with your own, and to console your Sacred Heart with our joy of being found worthy to share in your suffering and embraced by your love. May the trials, obstacles, pain, and challenges we face in this life bear fruit in the next. We ask this in your name. Amen.



Christ Carrying the Cross, Titian / Restored Traditions

Challenge

This week, choose one of the following options for your time in prayer. If possible, spend this time in your parish Eucharistic adoration chapel or before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle at your parish.

Option 1: ARRR prayer about a current situation involving trial or suffering

Using the Acknowledge, Relate, Receive, Respond prayer, bring a current area of suffering to the Lord and spend some time in conversation with him. The following is a suggested structure for prayer:

Acknowledge (10 minutes): Silence any devices and eliminate distractions. Spend time in quiet reflection and become aware of any interior affective movements you experience related to the situation. This includes thoughts, feelings, and desires. Acknowledge those movements and ask:

- What am I feeling?
- Why do I feel this?
- What is actually going on inside me?

Relate (10 minutes): Share what you have acknowledged with God in prayer. Express your thoughts, feelings, and reflections honestly. It may be helpful to write this prayer down or to journal during this time. Invite God to reveal to you how he sees the situation.

Receive (10 minutes): Become still and attentive to spiritual movements in prayer. During this time, remember you cannot control how or when God will speak. Continue to relate to God in prayer, taking time to listen in silence.

Respond (10 minutes): This is an opportunity to enter into communion with God and accept the gift you've received in prayer. Ask yourself:

- What have I received from God in prayer today?
- Have I received a new perspective on a situation? Peace? Joy?

Option 2: Read Mark 2:1–12

Imagine yourself in the scene. Who are you? Are you one of the friends? The crowd? The person on the mat? A scribe? Imagine the scene from that perspective. Then complete the following sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Notes

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