

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

(St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday

6:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.

6:00 A.M. Daily

Holy Days

6:00 A.M.; 8:00 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel

Montgomery, Alabama

10:45 A.M.

Only on first Sunday
of each month

St Pius V Chapel

Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 A.M.

Every Sunday except
first Sunday of each month

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 23, 2002 -- Green

Mass of Sunday: GI; Cr; Pref Trin.

Weekly Bulletin # 729

Of Suffering

(Sermon given by one of the Monks)

“Cast all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

My good people.

I know, with everything that is going on in the world at the present time: the chaos, the wars and all the rumors of war, all the threats, the violence and terrorism and killings, and then, also, all the mix-up in our own families, we oftentimes become more than a little discouraged. We can't help but wonder sometimes, at least in the back of our minds and ask: “God, are You there? Are You listening? Do You really care?” Sometimes, I think, our prayers become prayers of desperation, sometimes even prayers of demanding.

I think, when we ask God for something, we expect the answer we already have in our own minds. And when God does not answer our prayers the way we want them answered, we become disappointed and upset. My good people: God **does** care, and if He could feel pain now, His Heart would be bleeding for each one of us. He **knows** the tears and the pain and the hardships that we are going through. Let us remember, however, that God's ways are not our ways. He is so infinitely more knowledgeable than we are. We see only the little short-term picture. We are not able to see the overall picture He sees. We see only ourselves - and ourselves living in our own little world. Neither do we see how the suffering we are called upon to endure might be of some help to some other suffering soul, even in other parts of the world. But God knows and sees and understands. It is very hard for us to understand pain and sickness and suffering - it seems so pointless and useless and perhaps senseless. But this is where TRUST comes in. If pain and suffering were useless, would God have asked it of His Own Son? - His Own Beloved Son? - Of His Son, Who was, Himself, God? If pain was useless, would Our Lord have been as willing to suffer and die as He did?

We must not question God's ways. We must trust. He takes our pain and He makes use of it, that is, if we accept it willingly as a gift from Him. I know - truly I know - how strange it sounds that pain and suffering and heartbreak, and torture and terror are gifts from God. But they are - and He allows them. He may not actively will them, because He cannot will that which is evil, or any evil that may come from our sufferings, but He does allow suffering in His permissive Will. God looks at and knows the good that can come from our suffering. Christ, His Divine Son, carried His Cross - and God asks that we do nothing different, but to carry our cross also. The trouble is, we sometimes do not recognize a given particular pain or torment of mind or body, as a cross that Our Beloved Father is offering us. We fail to see how our problems might just be personal gifts from God, Himself. If only I could convey to each one of you this fact, that our sufferings **are** gifts from God. We are most like Christ when we suffer as He suffered - when we accept our suffering as He accepted His suffering. We must strive not to fight our sufferings. When we fight our suffering, when we fight our cross, we then find that we carry two crosses instead of only one. If we accept our cross, we carry it together with Our Blessed Lord. Whether we feel it or not, Christ is there, and He is helping us. Then it is that our cross, willingly carried, can be doing untold amounts of good - good that only God alone knows.

When we pray, let us not ask God to take the cross away, but rather, left us ask Him for the faith, and the love, and the strength to carry our cross as He would carry it if placed on His shoulders - as He carried His Own Cross for love of us. We must ask Our Lord for patience - patience to put up with our crosses, patience to carry our crosses. We must pray for patience to put up with those around us who add to the already heavy weight of our cross - whether their action is done purposely or accidentally. At the same time, do we ever stop to think that we may be adding to our neighbors' crosses, whether purposely or accidentally? After all, who among us is perfect? As we read in our Holy Rule, and in commentaries on our Holy Rule, - we are each other's “hair shirts” and very often add to each other's crosses.

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