



21. March 2024

## LENTEN ITINERARY

### Day 37: "Suffering and serenity"

We are just 3 days away from the beginning of Holy Week, and our Lenten itinerary is coming to an end. I would like to dedicate today's meditation to the theme of how to deal with suffering in the right way, which is undoubtedly one of the most difficult lessons in our journey of following Christ.

To address this issue, we will draw on an excellent meditation of Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene, O.C.D., from his book "Divine Intimacy". In addition, those who wish to go deeper into the subject can find a lecture on "Dealing with Suffering" at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyd1b03I3Wo>

The secret of bearing suffering correctly consists largely in self-forgetfulness and self-denial, in not thinking about oneself and what one is suffering, but in surrendering oneself to God. He who occupies himself with his sufferings and concentrates his attention on them, becomes incapable of bearing them serenely and courageously. Jesus said: *"Each day has enough trouble of its own"* (Mt 6:34). Therefore, let us try day by day, moment by moment, to bear the pains and sufferings that God puts in our way, without thinking about what we suffered yesterday and without worrying about what we will have to suffer tomorrow.

Even if the suffering is great, let us not overestimate it or make too much of it; let us not give in to the unhealthy tendency to indulge our own suffering; let us not stop to look at it, break it down and ponder it in all its details. In this way, we would paralyse the spirit of sacrifice and lose the strength to accept and overcome suffering. Those who are too preoccupied with their own pain often become insensitive and indifferent to the suffering of others.

In order to fight egocentric tendencies, it is necessary to get out of oneself and out of the circle of one's own suffering, and to concern oneself with the sufferings of others. In times of discouragement, the effort to help others is a most effective means of finding the strength to carry one's own cross. We must always bear in mind that we are never

alone in suffering. If our sufferings are great, there is never a lack of people who suffer even more. Our sufferings are a drop in the ocean of the pain of all mankind, and are almost nothing compared to the Passion of Jesus.

Whoever is too preoccupied with his own suffering, ends up making it even more bitter, drowns in it and lets every generous impulse wither away. On the other hand, he who is capable of forgetting himself, maintains his balance and is always capable of thinking more of others than of himself. Thus, he remains open to love and magnanimity towards God and his neighbour. The self-forgetful soul knows how to suffer with great courage and derives from it the greatest benefit for its sanctification.

In spite of all efforts to go beyond one's own suffering and to forget one's sorrows, there may come moments of such deep anguish, of such dense darkness, that the poor soul does not know how to go on, all the more so when the horizon, instead of brightening, becomes darker and darker. In such cases, there is nothing left but to throw oneself in the dark into the arms of God. We are so poor and weak that we always need support. Even if the soul forgets itself and stops thinking about itself, it still needs someone to support it and think about it. That someone is God. He never forgets us; He knows our suffering to its very depths; He sees our need and weakness, and is always ready to help the one who takes refuge in Him.

Of course we can also look to creatures for some comfort and help, but let us not deceive ourselves: they will not always understand us, nor will they always be there for us. But if we turn to God, we will never be disappointed. Even if He does not change our situation or take away our suffering, He will comfort our hearts inwardly, even if only in a hidden and silent way, and give us the strength to continue on our way.

*"Unload your burden onto Yahweh and he will sustain you"* (Ps 55:22). We should adopt this attitude of abandonment in times of suffering, and all the more so the harder we are hit. Greater suffering must be matched by greater surrender to God; then we will not succumb.

Many souls exaggerate and make a drama of their sufferings, because they are unable to recognise in them the paternal hand of God and do not sufficiently believe in His divine Providence.

If our life, with all its circumstances and even the most painful ones, were not in God's hand, then we would have every reason to fear. But, since everything is in His hands, we need not be afraid or frightened. The soul that is secure in God and abandons itself to Him is able to remain calm even in the greatest suffering, to accept with serenity even the most tragic events, to suffer calmly and courageously, because God always sustains it.

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Meditation on the reading of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/26/>