

27. May 2024

## Looking forward to eternity

1 Pe 1:3-9

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, [a] though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen [b] him you [c] love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.*

Suffering is undoubtedly one of man's most difficult trials, and the question is often asked: Why does God allow suffering?

That would be a separate topic that we cannot go into in the context of this meditation. For today, it is enough to say that suffering came into the world as a result of man's sin and that he will not be able to avoid it for the duration of his earthly life. When we meditate on the redemption that Christ obtained for us, we see that He Himself submitted to suffering for our sake and did not free us from all our infirmities simply by a word or a gesture of power. But He can use suffering if we accept it and are willing to endure it for His sake.

In today's reading, St Peter gives us a different perspective on suffering. When we internalise our faith and put it into practice, joy and hope grow in our souls and lead us to eternity. We must focus not only on our present life, with its duties and challenges, but also, and more importantly, on the life to come. From there we will have the strength to fulfil our mission on earth.

And this is indeed the case: The more we look to eternity, the easier it will be for us to accomplish our tasks in this world. Suffering and trials take on a different perspective. They are no longer simply the inevitable that we must endure; they are opportunities to test the quality of our faith, to grow and mature. Faith grounded in the fire becomes deeper and more stable; it does not keep wavering, but takes root.

But it is essential that we deepen the content of our faith and our relationship with God day by day. Just as true love between a man and a woman deepens and, after going through trials, acquires a quality different from the love of the beginning, so it is with our relationship with God.

Through suffering and trials, God gives us the opportunity to demonstrate our love for Him. In this way, He uses sickness and trials of all kinds for our good and salvation, integrating them into His plan for us.

Then we can lift up our eyes and let our hearts be more concerned with heavenly things than with earthly things (cf. Col 3:1). Certainly, it is often a slow process to detach ourselves from the 'gravity' of the earth. But if we keep lifting our spirits in prayer, if we deeply assimilate the words of Scripture and frequently receive the sacraments, we will discover more and more the taste of heavenly things and, as today's reading says, we will rejoice in our salvation and love the Lord even when we do not see Him. In this way, our security in Him will also grow, without this meaning that we can take things lightly.

So let us try not to be afraid of suffering and trials. Rather, let us ask the Lord to help us overcome them in Him. It is only for a short time, and God will see to it that we are not tempted beyond our strength (1 Cor 10:13).