

- Humanity has constantly asked, “*Why do bad things, like suffering, happen to good people?*”
 - When we gaze upon the Cross of Christ we gain a new perspective, that our God can bring good out of evil.
 - In our first reading, we meet Job; he was a just man who enjoyed many blessings including a wife, children, livestock and land.
 - He seemed blessed by God, but suddenly his life turned tragic for no apparent reason.
 - Job lost his health, children, possessions, and most of his friends.
 - The friends who remained said his sins must have caused this.
 - Crushed by his situation, Job bemoaned the harshness of life itself.
 - He used three images to describe what he was going through.
 - It was like being drafted into a bad war, which makes terrible demands and jeopardizes one’s life.
 - It was like being an overworked laborer with little or nothing to say about the work conditions.
 - Finally, it was like being a slave with no rights and totally dependent upon the slave owner.
 - Job bemoaned, “*I shall not see happiness again.*”
 - The reason Job cannot see any good arising from his sufferings was his soul was unprepared to suffer well.
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- Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen wrote, “*When suffering strikes, [people] become divorced from their pleasant surroundings and are left naked in their own souls. They then see that they were not really [pleasant and friendly], but irritable and impatient. When the sun of outer prosperity sank, they had no inner light to guide their darkened souls. It is, therefore, not what happens to us that matters; it is how we react to it.*”
 - So, what good can arise from suffering?
 - First, suffering gives us a unique perspective.
 - At the conclusion of the book of Job, God took Job on a whirlwind tour of the universe.
 - He asked Job whether he was present at the creation of the cosmos or whether he could measure the world.
 - Job realized that his suffering was a tiny ingredient in God’s overall plan and purpose for the universe.
 - The famous author, Dante, wrote, the universe “*contains within its depths all things bound in a single book by love in which creation is the scattered leaves.*”
 - Here on earth, we pick up a page now and again, perhaps an uplifting part of the story or perhaps one of its darker moments.
 - But the author of this book of creation, God, and the true meaning or conclusion, will only be revealed at the end of time.
 - This is why St. Clement of Alexandria said, “*If you do not hope, you will not find what is beyond your hope.*”

- Second, we participate in Christ's redemptive suffering.
 - The great spiritual writer, Thomas A Kempis, wrote, *"Nothing, however little, that is suffered for God's sake, can pass without merit in God's sight."*
 - We need only look at the Cross and what Christ did to begin to understand the power that can be released through what we call *"redemptive suffering."*
 - This is practiced by uniting our sufferings with the crucified Jesus as a participation in the one saving act.
 - St. Paul wrote, *"I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church."*
 - The only thing lacking in Christ's sufferings on the Cross is our individual participation as members of his body.
 - Thus, we can take our suffering and direct it outward for the salvation of others as Christ did.
 - Third, suffering purifies us by making us concentrate on our self.
 - Franz Werfel, the playwright and poet, commented, *"Sickness invites us to heaven or to hell."*
 - When we suffer and turn inward, we can turn bitter, disgruntled, and become selfish, or we can utilize it as an opportunity to purge unhealthy attachments and shed those pounds of temptations that plague us.
 - For Fulton Sheen said, *"There is much more opportunity for sinning when one is well than when one is ill."*
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- Lastly, suffering brings us Jesus' solidarity.
 - Our God does not remain silent in the face of our sufferings.
 - Rather in the gospel, a desperate crowd gathered around Jesus, and his miraculous healings and exorcisms were a glimpse of what is to come.
 - In the meantime, God's solidarity and friendship carry us through.
 - For the French Catholic poet, Paul Claudel said, *"Jesus did not come to explain suffering, but to fill it with his presence."*
 - When suffering befalls us, as it did Job, pray for good to arise from it.
 - For Fulton Sheen wrote, *"Once [Jesus] came, then never again could [we] say, 'He does not know what it is like to suffer.' He ... showed us that without Good Friday there would be no Easter Sunday. Never again can anyone say [like Job], 'What have I done to deserve this?'"*
 - Why? Jesus could ask the same question from the Cross, but he knew the good that would arise from it.