



SSPX

Sursum Corda

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Suffering

Yesterday we spoke of the religious life, particularly of the evangelical councils or the vows of religion. One particular aspect we considered was the combat against our insatiable desires for pleasure. We made the observation that in all things wherein we sin, there is a pursuit for something which is considered desirable; whether it be our own self, which is pride; whether it be our own will; or whether it be the things of the flesh. This is a great obstacle to our salvation to have these kinds of tendencies; they are part of all us as they are the effects of sin within the soul.

As a result, when we are presented with suffering, there is movement away or a distancing from – *No! I don't want that*. There is a horror of suffering, and that horror is a great impediment or a block to our sanctification.

St. Teresa de Avila said: *to combat the horror of suffering is an absolutely indispensable condition for reaching perfection*. We should not be so afraid of it. We should not step back so much. St. John of the Cross also gives the love of suffering an exceptional importance in the process of our sanctification.

I will speak a lot of suffering in this conference. The theme overall is the connection between suffering and charity.

Let us look at suffering first. Suffering is something that is necessary. Most spiritual writers will assert this. I think all spiritual writers would assert that suffering is necessary for your salvation, at least in some degree. Firstly, to make amends for our own sins; secondly, for the sanctification of our soul. How does that work? How does the suffering make up for or counterbalance our sins?

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Letter from the Chaplain

Dear Tertiaries,

This edition of *Sursum Corda* is a transcription of a conference on the value of suffering given in Quito, Ecuador. Mariana of Jesus gave herself as a victim for the Church of the 20th century. In order to appreciate the role of the victim soul in the world, as well as the fruits gained by the victim, it was necessary to give a layout on the relationship of charity and the degrees of suffering.

It is valuable for us to understand suffering and use it the right way. When Jesus gave Himself unto death for us, He suffers the Passion in His entire human nature, body and soul. When He gives Himself to us in the Eucharist, it is His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Those are HIS actions toward and for us; do we think OUR actions toward Christ should be different? When by our baptism we are

incorporated in the Body of Christ, do we think it is just our souls being incorporated? or is it also our whole human nature, body and soul? Since we know the answer, we must conclude that not only our souls, but our bodies also, are called to be united with Christ in His Passion.

This is the beauty of suffering only the Catholic can recognize! Jesus does call each one of us to a share in His Passion. It varies in degree per individual; some called to more, some less. But one thing is certain - we do not save our souls by simply carrying the mark of Christ's Passion upon our soul. More than that, we carry His actual Passion which He has worked in our whole being through the suffering given us by Divine Providence. Christ was betrayed by His own people, crucified by the Romans, because of my sins. I am crucified by Christ Himself, who abides in me to offer satisfaction and worship to Our Father. I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me. With Christ I am nailed to the cross.

In Christ,



Fr. Adam Purdy

When we sin, the balance of divine justice is disturbed. When we sin, we say that we made a mistake; and now in order to return to this justice, to get the balance back, we need to make up for it. This was the whole point of the Incarnation. With sin, justice was lost. Man became unjust and failed to give God His due. There was no man capable of fixing this imbalance created by sin. There was only one man who would be able to: This was the necessity of Christ in His incarnation - *Behold the Lamb of God, behold He who takes away that sin of the world*, referring firstly to original sin.

The Incarnation, particularly Christ on the cross, is able to reestablish the balance. The blood of Christ is applied to our souls in baptism. We become incorporated in Christ, and therefore His merits are our merits. And so, we say yes! indeed we have restored the balance. But sin is not over there; we sin again through the weakness of our human nature. We commit actual sins; and therefore, the justice of God is always disturbed. These actual sins, when placed on the scales of justice, need of some satisfaction.

It is interesting when looking at the nature of the

sin. As we said previously, with sin there is a certain kind of desire for something that is pleasurable. The opposite of the pleasure would be suffering. And since we have committed a sin, (seeking after something that is pleasurable), it is going to be something of suffering that restores the balance.

It is always suffering in union with Christ's suffering. As we are members of the Mystical Body of Christ, it requires our union in His suffering. The suffering will happen in this life or the next. We know of those sentences (in Scripture) - think of the parable of Dives and Lazarus in the Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter 16: (paraphrase) *you had all these things in this life. You were 'rewarded'. You were living well in this life, and because you had no suffering from your sins in this life, now you are going to suffer.* And then Lazarus, he suffered a ton. The dogs were licking his sores. And he was able to atone for his sins because of his suffering; and, therefore, he did not suffer in the next life.

Why does anyone sin? They are going after something that gives them a delight. Even if it is a perverse delight, nonetheless it is perceived as a delight.



Justice, therefore, demands that a certain weight of sorrow be placed in the scales. As I said, the principle reparation is effected through Christ's passion. That is when everyone goes to the sacrament of penance, and they will receive the sacramental absolution which is an application of the merits and the Blood of Christ from His Passion. It is as if the priest takes a handful of Christ's Blood, and throws it in your face and we are cleansed.

However, as we are baptized and members of Christ's Mystical Body, Christ being the head, we cannot separate ourselves from him. As he will suffer, we also will have a share in suffering. We must co-operate; operate together with him simultaneously. We say with St. Paul: *to fill up those things that are wanting to the passion of Christ.* What is lacking to the passion of Christ? Our involvement! It is really that simple. We must operate together with Christ in our redemption.

The sacramental absolution does not free us from all punishment. You know the expression, *the punishment due to sin.* If someone has a perfect contrition, and therefore, also a perfect act of charity, sin cannot coexist. It cannot exist at the same time as perfect charity. The moment someone reaches perfect charity or perfect contrition, there is no more sin (regardless of reception of the sacramental ritual). But when sacramental absolution is given, it does not necessarily, and in most cases, does not free from the punishment due to sin. The punishment is that share of sorrow that Christ will allot to us because of sin; that share of sorrow, or that share of suffering, that share of pain is going to come. If it does not come in this life, it is going to come in the next.

We can understand why Christ expects us to cooperate. Imagine seeing Christ in the way of the cross. You have seen that film the Passion of the Christ. And remember that scene where Christ falls down, but he turns his head, and he sees His Mother, and His Mother sees Him. Now, imagine it was you and he's looking right through you. And then he says: *are you just going to sit there and watch me do this for you? Or are you going to come and try to help me? I'm doing this for you; it's not even for me! Are you going to come and join me doing it for you?* We know the answer.

Sanctification consists in the evermore intense incorporation in Christ. It's a great definition of sanctity - when someone is becoming holier and holier. What does that really mean? It means that they are becoming more and more one with Christ. There is a kind of Christification - to make into

Christ - that happens as we grow in holiness.

When all is said and done, the saint is a faithful reproduction of Christ. That is what he is! But how is this going to be done? What is the way that Christ says we are effectively to unite with him? He said: *if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.* There is no other way! It is necessary to embrace the suffering if we are going to take up the cross. Do we imagine for a second it does not include suffering? Of course, it includes suffering! The cross is not a symbol of pleasure and delight and enjoyment; it is a symbol of suffering and agony and pain and death to ourselves.

To take up Christ's cross is to carry it to Calvary, not to see how they crucified Christ, but to actually be crucified with him. One of the spiritual writers said: *Jesus, I want to be crucified on the other side of the same cross.* This is a great thought in our prayer. There is no sanctification without crucifixion with Christ.

There is an excellence that comes with suffering. Taking hold of suffering benefits us greatly. It is one of those - *if you only knew that it was good for you.*

What are these benefits?

The punishment for sin is made in this life

Punishment for sin will happen in either in this life or the next. It is a great grace given to the soul to be able to make up for sin in this life. Trust me! if you were saying to yourself: *I would rather take my punishment in purgatory* - you are delusional, as that will be far worse than the sufferings of this life - this is why it is a great grace of God. It is as if Jesus said: *I'm going to give you some wimpy stuff in this life, try to offer that up. It will make me pleased. Trust me, you don't want the other. I'm going to give you this stuff, and it's a great favor.* It's a great grace of God to have that, to be able to repay our debts in this life so that we do not have to suffer in purgatory.

Suffering liberates the soul

The flesh tends to dominate the spirit. It's only by severities, by disciplines, by privations, different sufferings and pains, that we can reverse that order. We need the spirit to dominate the flesh. By continuous discipline, this can happen.

Suffering makes us understand that this is a valley of tears

Imagine that nothing went wrong here, that everything was Happyville. There was never a suffering. There was never a mistake. There was never an error. There was never a death. People would start to think *boy, this life is great! This is awesome. I just want to stay here.* They would forget that their supernatural destiny is not in this life. We are pilgrims in this life, and we look forward to the good that God has promised to those who love him. If everything were great in this life, we would forget God. You notice when the towers fell down in New York City the number of people who hit their knees was unprecedented. Because of a suffering, it made them remember God, and it made them perhaps remember thanking God for the life that they still have. Maybe it reminded them, I should pray for those who lost their life. It's a great benefit to the soul that we have suffering because it makes us realize that our lot is not here. St. John in the Apocalypse says, in the next life there will be no more tears; there will be no more suffering. He does not say it about this life.

In fact, when giving the retreats and going over the discernments of spirits, for those of you who have been on exercises – (I'll give a sales pitch right now -- the Ignatian Exercises, all of you should go. If you think, *nah! I don't need it. I'm good. No problem. Everything is just right.* You deceive yourselves. So that was a sales pitch). So the Discernments of Spirits, St. Ignatius goes into how the soul should react in the face of consolation and how the soul should react in the face of desolation. The number of rules that he has for desolation almost triple those of consolation, and that is an acknowledgment that this life is not meant to be strawberry fields forever. This life is meant to be difficult. You are meant to suffer. And why? What greater grace can Christ give to you than letting you make up as much as possible for your own sins.

The soul is purged

There is a wonderful expression in scripture, *tamquam aurum in fornace*, as the gold is purified in the furnace. In order to get pure gold, you have got to burn it in the furnace. Make it hot, and then skim

off the impurities, and then the gold gets purer and purer. Well, that's what suffering is. Suffering is like the fire that's going to purge the soul and so purify the soul, make it beautiful in God's eyes like a precious gold that sparkles and shines. This is only going to come from suffering, and if we can say that every sin is a disorder - and thus it twists and perverts the soul and makes it ugly in God's eyes, then offering the suffering and purging the soul would make it beautiful in God's eyes. Suffering tends to destroy sin or erase its marks within our soul. If it is destroying sin within our soul, and it is erasing the marks of sin on our soul, that means it is making it beautiful in God's eyes. Those saints that are the most beautiful are those that have been purified the most.

Suffering disposes us to God's Mercy and favor

We could say that the Almighty God is overcome. You know, those expressions that sometimes the liturgy uses, like *him whom the heavens couldn't contain, you contained in your womb.* Almighty God who, technically speaking, isn't overcome by anything, is overcome by one thing - our wretchedness and misery in suffering. When He sees that, it calls for the Mercy of God, especially when we are humbled.

We are able to communicate the value of suffering to others through the union of the Mystical Body

An important consideration is the union of members in the Mystical Body of Christ. This consideration is also very important for what we will discuss about Mariana de Jesus. Because of this union of members in the Mystical Body of Christ, God can accept the suffering of one for the sake of another. For example, the children at Fatima. The Virgin Mary said: *will you make some penances for the conversion of sinners?* And so, they started making some penances, putting little stones in their shoes, and tying cords around their waist, or not having food for all day long. They made their little penances, and for what? Because God could accept that suffering which they offered for another because of the union



of the members in the Mystical Body of Christ; and that happens ultimately through the charity that exists between Christ and His members. It's like a community of goods. It's the treasury of the Church.

When everything else fails, and people always ask this question, *you know, Father, what do I do? My son has gone off and married a -- whatever.* We all know these stories. And *what am I supposed to do? Or my godson is this, or my daughter has done that, or she has lapsed from the faith, or this has happened. I try to tell them, and I preach at them, and it just alienates them.* No kidding! *What am I supposed to do?* Well, when all else fails, there is a little recourse to suffering to obtain the salvation of their soul, and that will be a very efficacious one. One of the things that St. John Vianney said about the priest and his parishioners - the priest will try to

be a good example, and he will show virtue, and he will preach virtue, and he will preach the faith and live the faith and have charity, and his parishioners are still a bunch of wretches. And then the advice is: *Have you suffered? Have you done your penance? Have you foregone food with your fasting? Have you made mortifications? Have you whipped yourself? Don't talk to me about the conversion of your parishioners unless you do those things.* That's what the advice was.

We also see this in the life of Mariana. There was the head of the rebellious sisters; they called her *La Capitana*. And in order to save her soul, Mariana agreed to the sufferings of hell for five years. Like a soul that is damned, a soul that goes to hell, yet still alive on earth. She suffered this for five years, for the conversion and the salvation of that sister.

We can make a glance at the spectrum of holiness and virtue within the Mystical Body of Christ. The principal reason why there are so few saints is because they do not want to enter the way of suffering. When God tests them, they draw back in cowardliness and pusillanimity, *small spiritedness*. Some may have asked for some kind of cross, but it's always one of their own choosing. *Oh, I could, you know, do this. I'm going to fast on Wednesday, Fridays, and Saturdays.* But then when it comes to their duty of state, they fail. And when God asks them something different, it's like the balloon just popped; then they relinquish the effort. They give up the road to perfection. Or when the soul has an unwillingness for the cross that God has put on their shoulders, and so they abandon the road of perfection.

Our attitude with regard to suffering must be the one of *fiat*, the same word of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Let it be done that way to me. This is the direction of Divine Providence, to embrace suffering as God wishes to send me. That is the greatest thing to do. A complete subjection to God's loving providence. It's not easy to achieve, and we have to advance in it gradually. We do not become saints overnight. We do not become spiritually perfect overnight. Instead,



we have to fight the good fight. And we'll do that by degrees, by steps.

What are these steps then? How do we advance in holiness? The reason why I am going to cover this - it is particularly important for another aspect of Mariana's life. I am sure you are waiting for the moment when I actually give the conference on Mariana. But I want to prepare you to appreciate her more. That's why I am going through these things. You can look at the sensational things of the life of a saint and say: *Wow! she levitated. What a great saint! Or, whoa! look at that, she worked a miracle. What a great saint!* We easily go for these sensational things, and we forget what actually the road to perfection is; and we forget the background that built a Mariana de Jesus. And so that's why we look at these things.

What steps, then, do we make in growing in holiness? What are the degrees of love and suffering? We put love with suffering, as it is only with the spirit of love that we are capable of enduring.

The first: Never omit any of our duties of state because of the suffering or the inconvenience that they may cause

It's hard to get up early for mass on Sunday, and it's just easier -- you know, it's Super Bowl Sunday. I can't miss that. You don't know how many people do this. They have their Super Bowl party. That's this Sunday, by the way. I'm going to miss it. They have their Super Bowl party, and they won't go to mass. They will forgo their duty of state because of some kind of inconvenience or difficulty. The examples do not always involve grave sin. There are things less obvious - like mom and dad praying in the church so piously, yet their kids are raising cane behind them. They fail in their duty of state. The kids caused an inconvenience, but they chose to ignore it. To discipline and punish the children before their own piety - that's actually their duty of state.

So never omitting any of our duties of state - this does require that we are aware of all the ins and outs of our duty of state. We have different kinds of duties of state. We have our duties toward God; we have our duties toward our spouse; we have our duties toward our children; we have our duties toward our neighbor; we have duties toward our employer; we



have our duty towards our employees if you are the employer. And this fulfillment of our duty of state is necessary for us in order to preserve the grace in our soul. If we fail in some kind of serious duty of state, it is a sin.

Some come to the priest and ask for extra penances. Do not come and ask for extra penances if you cannot even fulfill your duty of state. Often, a strict adherence to our duty of state is the best penance.

The second: resignation to the crosses which God permits to send us

A difficulty or cross comes our way, and this one is more perfect than just simple accomplishing our duty of state because unexpected adversity enters the picture. We suffer a trial that God permits us. It is more perfect to accept what God sends or permits, and these contradictions have a great value for our sanctification. They are utilized by divine providence as an instrument for our sanctification. *Why is God permitting this to happen to me?* God chastises those he loves. It is because He is permitting this to happen to you that you are growing in holiness. And believe it or not, when you endure it and use it as an instrument of perfection, you grow in your identification with Christ. So just say thank you! This is what Job said: *Blessed be God!* His wife was quite another story: *I can't believe this, that God has allowed this to you. You are a God man; you have never sinned before and look at this. It's all happening to you. Everything is lost. It's devastation. You are sitting on a dung hill. The dogs are licking your sores, and you are scraping them off with a piece of clay. You who had everything before.* Job's answer: *Blessed be God. God has given to me good things. Why shouldn't He also give to me bad things?*

Are these things really bad? Or did we just perceive them as bad because we have that horror for suffering? These contradictions chisel us into the likeness of Christ, and God will always use the persons around us, things around us, to afflict us; and, therefore, we have the opportunity of performing some act which will be of great value in our spiritual progress. It will be a great value.

The third: the practice of voluntary mortification.

That means you positively take some suffering for yourself. It's different from the second one because its origin is involuntary. A good example is the children at Fatima: *I am going to put stones in my shoes; I'm going to walk barefoot; I will tie some cord around my waist.* These are voluntary active mortifications and they are more perfect than merely passive ones. The intensity we have in the voluntary mortifications is always determined in a case-by-case thing. Some request of their director: *Father, every night I want to scourge myself with metal.* Are you out of your mind? People tend to be imbalanced about their voluntary mortifications. It's one of the reasons why nobody should take extreme mortifications upon yourself without actually consulting your confessor. People that do that, and they fail, the crash is huge, the injury to their pride is huge.

Also interesting with these kinds of mortifications - as the soul corresponds to the inspirations of God, the Holy Ghost will be more demanding. That is where you will see some of the saints who were offering some voluntary mortifications. You should go to the Convent of San Diego. There you will see some of the instruments of mortification that Padre Almedo was using. You would wonder how he would survive it. But as the soul corresponds to these inspirations with regard to mortifications, the Holy Ghost will be more demanding of the soul. At the same time, He will increase the strength of soul to be able to endure it. And that's how God, so to speak, is responsible for the growth, the remarkable growth, of some of the great saints.

The fourth: to prefer suffering to pleasure

I know this sounds at best impossible, at worst sadistic. It sounds impossible to prefer suffering to pleasure as it is so contrary to our nature. It's contrary, specifically, to our sinful nature; but nonetheless, saints have achieved it. A moment arrives when through continuous effort and continuous purgation when a soul feels in an instinctive way, a horror for something pleasurable. This can happen to us sometimes during Lent when we're really hitting it hard. We are diligent in our penance and mortifications, we are being successful, we are trying to offer more

prayer, and really be in the spirit of self-denial. Then all of a sudden something comes up like a chocolate bar and our reaction is horror. It is a kind of holy instinct that developed by continuous discipline.

We have instincts for certain things. An instinct might be called a spontaneous reaction. I slammed my thumb with a hammer, what's the first thing I am going to do? I'll say ouch or something like it. It just comes instantaneously. It's instinctive. If someone swings at me, I am going to put my hands up right away. It's instinctive. It is possible because of training, that we develop and instinctive horror of sin as well as an instinctive horror for something pleasurable as it would be detrimental to sanctification. It's possible! Just keep trying! Maybe by the end of our lives, it will happen. We'll set our sight on it.

The last: to offer oneself as victim

This one corresponds to Mariana of Jesus and is really the entire point of giving this conference. To offer oneself as victim for the sanctification of souls or the conversion of sinners – for some supernatural motive.

St. Marianita offered herself as a victim for the sins of her countrymen. To avert the wrath of God who would punish the sinful people, she offered to take the severe punishments in place of and for the benefit of her people. She had a great supernatural desire within herself to stand and take the hit for everybody. Imagine everybody in this room was the huge sinner, and then there I was kneeling in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and I said: *No, Jesus, let me take all of theirs. I'll take it all.* This is what Jesus did! Jesus with outstretched arms offered himself on the cross saying: *I will take all of it.*

This kind of exchange presupposes union of the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. If we were not all united in Christ, no matter what I offered for you, it would be of no avail as there is no connection. The connection comes through charity.

God selects certain souls. It is not common, and it should not be common as most cannot take it. It would be presumption to say you could take it. God selects certain souls, and particularly those who have offered themselves knowingly for this work. By their merits and their sacrifices, they contribute to the application of the merits of Christ's redemption, and they apply it (well God, Christ himself, will apply it) to others. These souls lend to Christ a new human-

ity in which he can be crucified again - and he crucifies them! Victim souls historically bear excruciating pain and suffering, and it usually will terminate their life speedily, quickly, those who are genuine victims. These souls are led through a terrifying martyrdom of body and soul, and it is only by extraordinary grace that they are able to sustain. Jesus says: *Offer yourself to me as victim; your humanity, body and soul are going to become another way I can be crucified. I am going to crucify you!* And then he gives it to them, but at the same time He is still holding them, so they are able to sustain and make the offering. And it does conclude at the height of Calvary totally transformed into Christ crucified.

What a beautiful thought that someone could be called to that level of identification with Christ in his crucifixion. This is exactly what a victim is, to be crucified in an extraordinary way. And it is rare because there are so few that can take it. I remember in the seminary when we were going over these ideas in Ascetical and Mystical Theology, the priest professor said: *don't even think about it! You would be the dumbest person on the planet if you thought of offering yourself as a victim.* So just remember that! These souls have a particular grace and inspiration: these souls have a perfect knowledge of the redemptive efficacy of their martyrdom and the ability to contribute in this way to Christ's merits. It's like they are taking Christ's merits and applying it to others in an extraordinary way. And these souls will form one of the most beautiful crowns of glory in heaven.

Mariana of Jesus' life was characterized by this single mark and greatest predilection that she was to cooperate in Christ's crucifixion. She was asked to cooperate with this distribution of Christ's merits. *Will you be a victim?* And she said yes! What is particularly beautiful for us to consider: she was asked to be a victim for our time, for the church, for the members of the church, for the conversion of sinners, for the salvation of souls, and for the recovery of this crisis that we are living through. We could all say thank you to Mariana. We will never know how much she has actually done, but when presented with this single greatest mark of God's affection, we can imagine the height of sanctity she achieved, and we can imagine the effectiveness of her mission during this crisis.