

The Presentation

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. - Luke 2:25-26

I live in a world of instant gratification. I can have instant coffee or tea. I can heat a meal in seconds. I can find an answer to a question through a search engine almost instantly. I have my favorite television shows available to watch at my fingertips anytime I want. I can contact my friends thousands of miles away in seconds through texting or social media. If at any time I feel as though these things are not fast enough or they aren't working, I perceive it as suffering. I live in a world that waits for nothing. I live in a world without patience and a life without patience is one of suffering, instant suffering, so perceived.

Simeon is the epitome of patience. God had revealed to Him that he would see the Savior. What I'm not told is when Simeon received this revelation. Looking at it through the eyes of the modern world I'd like to think God told him that morning or maybe at least that week. Yet this revelation could have come to him when he was merely a boy.

Lord, help me to be patient and to endure the times of waiting as Simeon did, always trusting Your timing and Your will.

The Finding in the Temple

...and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. - Luke 2:45-47

Suffering is a gift from God. I may not be able to choose its form, duration, or timing but I can choose how I react to it. My reaction to suffering can not only bring me closer to God, it can also be a great example to the rest of the world.

When Mary and Joseph lost Jesus they did not lash out, wallow in self-pity, or blame others. Rather, Mary's reaction to the loss of Jesus gives me an example of how to deal with all suffering. She immediately sought God in the midst of the suffering. Mary trusted that she would find God. She asked why the suffering was happening and she accepted and contemplated the answer.

Lord, help me to seek your face in the midst of my suffering. Help me to trust that you are there. Give me the courage to ask you why but give me even more courage to accept your answer.

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES OF SUFFERING



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The Annuciation

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. - Luke 1:38

Nearly 20 years ago I said "yes" to donating blood that would be stored in a database in the hope that I would one day become a match that could save a life. That "yes" caused a small amount of suffering by way of a needle. 13 years later I was given the opportunity to say "yes" again because I was found to be a match. This "yes", however, would entail a great deal more suffering.

This "yes" meant that I would need to undergo numerous medical tests, receive daily injections, and be confined to a hospital bed for hours as the staff removed my blood from one arm and returned it through another. I did say "yes" and my suffering saved the life of a young man with Leukemia.

Saying "yes" to God doesn't mean that life will be a walk in the park. Often, saying "yes" to God means suffering. I suffer when I deny myself for love of Him and I suffer when I follow Him and turn away from the world.

Mary's "yes" begins her suffering. Her "yes" opened the door to God and His plan to redeem the world through the suffering, death, and resurrection of her son, and His son.

Lord, help me to imitate Jesus and Mary by accepting my suffering as a joyful gift, a gift that has the power to save if I'll only say, "yes".

The Visitation

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home. - Luke 39-40, 56

When I am suffering I often act more like a wounded animal than a saint. When I have a headache, my temper is short. When my back hurts, I don't have time to help others. If I have a cold, I want the world to stop until I feel better. My suffering brings out a tendency for me to focus on myself.

Mary gives me a great example of how to handle my suffering. Like her Son, in the midst of suffering, she focuses on others. Mary was surely suffering like any woman in the early stages of pregnancy. However, she focuses on helping others. She spends the first three months of her pregnancy, often the most difficult, helping her cousin Elizabeth who was both elderly and pregnant.

Lord, help me to offer up my suffering as a sacrifice to you. Rather than focus on my suffering, give me the grace to focus on others and offer my suffering for their sake.

The Nativity

And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. - Luke 2:6-7

I'm in a hurry, the traffic is at a standstill. I worked all night on a report, my computer crashed. I'm arriving at a meeting, I realize I forgot something. I promised my family pancakes, we're out of flour. Suffering just happens, there's no way to avoid it. I have no way to control these things that happen to me but I do have a choice in how I react to them. I can rail against the world and the heavens or I can ask God to help me accept it as His will. Every suffering provides an opportunity to choose God's will and not mine.

Mary wanted to stay in Nazareth, she had to go to Bethlehem. She would have preferred a cart or wagon, she had to ride a donkey. Mary would have liked a bed and clean sheets, she had to stay in a cave where animals were kept. She would have liked to place baby Jesus in a crib, a feeding trough was the only thing available. Mary never complained, she accepted all these sufferings as God's will.

Lord, help me to accept the inconveniences and sufferings I will encounter each day. Give me the grace to accept them patiently as Your will.