

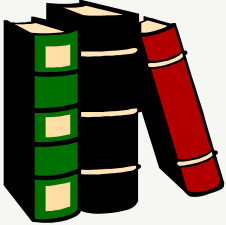


- A RESOURCE FOR ONGOING FORMATION -

Part 2: A Life of Penance and Daily Conversion

Chapter 10. Suffering

Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witnessing to him even in difficulties and persecutions. Rule 10



Look at the Scriptures. Jesus suffered for us; we must also be prepared to suffer on his behalf. We endure suffering in this life as a means of **Sanctification**.

Isa 53.5

Lk 9.23

Acts 5.41

I Cor 4.12

Heb 5.8; 11.25

I Pet 2.21; 3.16; 4.16

For the Christian, any understanding of suffering comes directly from an understanding of the suffering of Christ himself. To bring to the fore a view of Christ that is little more than 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild' is to remain in spiritual infancy, having failed to grasp the centrality of the passion and death of the one who is above all the Saviour who 'suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.' Whatever we suffer we should regard as nothing more than a pale reflection of his suffering; his suffering bringing our own suffering into true perspective.



The BLOOD of the martyrs is the SEED of the Church

If 'God is love' how come there is suffering for the innocent—for children?



Public Enemy Number One

Once Christianity began making an impact upon society, it came to the notice of those completely uninterested in...internal theological disputes. As one Catholic historian has written, 'The established state cult of the emperor could hardly be expected to favour a religion founded by an executed criminal' [John P Dollan *Catholicism* (p 11)]. But more offensive even than the character of its 'founder' was Christianity's absolute claims. It was not proposed as just one new religion among many, but as *true* religion, 'In a culture and civilisation toward which they had contributed nothing, the Christians, by rejecting the religious pluralism of the Roman state, made themselves public enemies' [Ibid.].

Until the middle of the 2nd Century, however, the *persecution* of Christians was of a local nature with a relatively small number of victims...On the other hand, there would be many instances of severe repression and cruelty in later years, especially in the reigns of Decius [d 251] and Diocletian [d 305]...

The conversion of Constantine in the year 312 marked another great turning point in the historical progress of the Church...The new emperor pursued a vigorous campaign against pagan practices and lavished money and monuments upon the Church. Roman law was modified to accommodate Christian values, and the clergy were accorded privileged status.

Richard P McBrien *Catholicism* (p 612)



Scripture—

Rom 5. 1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God 's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Jas 1. 2-4

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.