

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 22:15-21

A few years ago, I read an article in the newspaper. The topic was, “The time to claim the right to die.” In the article, the writer supported the movement to legalize euthanasia. A couple days later, I saw another article about a similar topic. It was focused on a 24-year-old woman in Belgium. Physically, this woman was healthy, but mentally, she was clinically depressed. Believe it or not, under Belgian law, this depression qualified her to undergo euthanasia if she wanted, even though she was not terminally ill. Today, it seems like people are losing the sense of truth, specifically, the truth that God is our Creator and our only Master. This euthanasia trend can lead people to disregard the incomparable value of human life.

Some people have a functionalist view of human dignity and life. When they get sick and suffer from a serious illness, many people feel that their suffering is useless. Often times, to a certain degree, they feel that *they* are useless. This is called functionalism, and this idea can tempt some people to either end their lives—or at least seriously consider it—to avoid suffering.

However, in today's gospel, Jesus says we have to always remember Who we belong to.

“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar
and to God what belongs to God.”

Who does not belong to God? Whose life did not come from God, the Creator?

Jesus' words in today's gospel remind us that we are not the masters of our own lives; we come from God, and by living a Christ-centered life, we return to God.

Some might say; “Then why has God not taken away illness and suffering from the world?”

We do not know the exact answer. However, we do know that God Himself experienced human suffering and death on the Cross. God's love for humanity was starkly revealed on the cross through all the sufferings of Jesus. If we stop and think about His Passion and Death, it is truly remarkable. Jesus *willingly* suffered and died on the cross for all of us.

St. John Paul II said “The suffering of Christ created the good of the world’s redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite.”

For us Christians, suffering is closely related with the Paschal Mystery of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that is, His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Jesus did not remove suffering from the world. However, he defeated the evil root of suffering and gave a new meaning of love to human suffering. Furthermore, Christ’s redemptive suffering is opened to all of us who follow him as disciples.

St. John Paul II again emphasized this redemptive dimension of human suffering.

“Christ’s redemptive work lives and develops as the body of Christ, the Church, and in this dimension every human suffering, by reason of the loving union with Christ, complete the suffering of Christ. The Church is the space or context in which human sufferings complete the suffering of Christ.”

Therefore, through human suffering, Christians reflect God’s infinite love, which was revealed through the life, the teachings, the pain and the suffering of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, by suffering,

we unite ourselves with Jesus and participate in *His* redemptive suffering. Uniting all our sufferings with Christ leads us to the hope of eternal life which Christ has promised us.

My friends, I encourage you to reflect on the transcendent dimension of human suffering. If we reflect and really think about its significance, when we *do* suffer, it will be easier to accept our hardships and unite them to Jesus' suffering. When we devalue and ignore the meaning of human suffering, we devalue human nature by ignoring human dignity.

Therefore, as we celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, may all of us, as the body of Christ, ask God to give strength, peace, comfort, and courage to those who will be anointed today. Furthermore, we ask that through our own suffering, we may be united with our Lord who suffered on the Cross.