

University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
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The Sanctification of Suffering.

"Dear Joe: Nothing is harder to take than the cross God is offering you now, but there is this always to be remembered about our crosses: God prepares us for them, and does not suffer us to be tempted beyond our capacity. The fact that you have recourse at once to prayer shows that your training has been absorbed; and the thing you must learn to do in prayer is to say with all your heart, 'Thy will be done.'

"Owen Francis Dudley has just published a new book, 'Pageant of Life' (Longmans). That lesson is brought out beautifully in the book (as it was to some extent in 'The Shadow on the Earth'). It is often only when we can learn to mean that petition of the Our Father that we can get the answer to our prayer. The answer may not always be the one we have picked out in our foolish wisdom; it is always the one that Divine Wisdom knows is best for us - and if it is bitterness, He makes the bitter very sweet, and we would not want it otherwise.

"The enclosed Bulletins have some lessons for you. A letter came in just after the publication of the one entitled, 'Prayer is Good With Fasting and Alms.' The problem it presented was a real tragedy; curiously enough, the answer was found in the very next verse of the book of Tobias (the verse following the last one quoted in the Bulletin). It reads: 'And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.' (Tobias, 12:13) Because!

"Briefly, the boy's story was this: He had been a freshman here last year, and the depression had prevented his return. He had since June traveled 11,000 miles in a futile quest for work. Just now he was living on the charity of an agnostic. His greatest pain was caused by the fact that he could do nothing to help his poor mother. He had always been a good boy, leading a straight life, and practicing daily Communion at school last year; now he was beginning to wonder whether it pays to be good.

"A letter in reply directed him to this prodigious lesson in the book of Tobias. He waited three weeks to answer, because he wanted to be sure of his feelings. He had received the Sacraments in the meantime, and with the help of that sacramental grace he had begun to see, for the first time in his life, why it was that Christ, Who had done no evil, took upon Himself the sins of all mankind and suffered the penalty for them. Christ sanctified suffering! He made it the most glorious expression of love possible! Love that is not tried may be only a wonderful, fickle emotion; love that has not suffered may not be love at all.

"He began to see what Christ meant when He told the Apostles at the Last Supper: 'I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me, that beareth not fruit, He will take away: and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' (St. John, 15:1,2) It is God's business, not ours, to say in what way our earthly affections may be best purged.

"There is nothing wrong in praying, as you are, that the plans you laid so carefully, and so prayerfully, be not frustrated by this tragedy which you are facing. God lets us have these needs that we may pray the more. But resignation and perseverance, the hardest lessons for us to learn in prayer, must be part of every petition.

"The boys have been requested to pray for your intentions, and you may be sure that they will not let you down. (It may comfort you to know that 22% of the requests for prayers that have appeared in the Bulletin this year have been from alumni; like you, their first thought is of Notre Dame when affliction comes.) God may hear these supplications and grant you the miracle you want; if He knows that it is for the best that things turn out otherwise, you may be sure that He will grant you the grace to bear your cross."