



Happy are Those Who Mourn

Why does Jesus say that God would comfort those who mourn when all that humans want is a life without sadness and suffering?



Jesus suffered on the cross and died for us. When we suffer for Him, He gives us the strength to bear it. There are many Catholic saints who drew strength from Jesus and became a living testimony to His unconditional love for humanity.

Have you heard of Saint Alphonsa from Kerala? She was a sister in the Franciscan Clarist congregation founded by French Bishop Charles Lavigne S. J. During the 35 years she lived, Alphonsa suffered for more than 15 years from different kinds of sickness at a time when modern medicine was not easily available.



But Sister Alphonsa did not complain. She prayed: “Oh my Jesus, hide me in the wound of Thy Sacred Heart. Free me from my evil desire to be loved and esteemed. Guard me from the mean pursuit of honour and fame. Make me humble till I become a small spark in the flame of love in your Sacred Heart. Grant me the grace to forget myself and all worldly things... Amen.”

Alphonsa went on to become the first woman saint of India. For Saint Alphonsa, suffering was a gift of God and she sought refuge from her suffering in Jesus because she understood the true meaning of the Beatitude – happy are those who mourn because they will be comforted.

This Beatitude tells us that suffering cannot be avoided but we must look at it as Jesus did or Alphonsa did. Remember, Jesus Himself suffered and has told us that whoever does not carry His own cross cannot be His disciple. The price of becoming a Christian is suffering and only those who can be happy in mourning can be good disciples of Jesus.

“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer,” wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great Christian theologian from Germany in his famous book, ‘The Cost of Discipleship’.

That is why the Catholic Church Canonises the martyrs or people who suffer in the name of Jesus. For, those who suffer are comforted in the company of Jesus and through their suffering many others are also comforted.



Word of God

Matthew 16:21-25

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."



Read: *"The Uniquely Christian Response to the Problem of Suffering"* by Fredric Heidemann in www.wordonfire.org: "Christianity is unique in that it faces suffering head on, speaks directly to it, and binds it into the process of salvation. Thus, while Christians face the same psychological and emotional difficulties in the face of suffering as everyone else, we should remember Blaise Pascal's words that "suffering is the natural state for a Christian." Indeed, it is an inescapable part of the joy of our redemption."

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Find out more about the life of Saint Alphonsa and her Franciscan Clarist Congregation founded by the French Bishop Charles Lavigne.

Bible@Home - Matthew 5: 4

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