

Week Two/Day Four: *Patience*

1. Place yourself in God's presence

2. Ask Him for the grace you seek: *to acquire knowledge of yourself and the grace of true patience*

3. Today's Meditation: (Taken from *The Glories of Mary* by St. Alphonsus Ligouri)

In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras (Lk 21:19).

"We are all placed in this world," writes St. Alphonsus Ligouri, "to suffer."

Pleasant outlook on life, right?

But it is true. No one in this world is perfect. Everyone has free will. Suffer will occur. It will occur because no one in this world is perfect, we are all fallen; and because we all have the tendency to misuse our freedom for selfish gains. When two wills clash, one must suffer.

Suffering is a part of life, but Mary teaches us how to face it: with patience. We must face suffering with patience as Our Blessed Mother did, says St. Alphonsus, so that like her we may "gain our own souls unto life eternal." Our Lord Himself says, *In your patience you shall possess your souls.* [Luke 21:19]

Mary is our God-given model of patience. All we have to do is turn to the Gospels and there we will find abundant examples of Mary's patience.

Look at the wedding feast of Cana. Is not the answer that our Lord gives to His mother's request a bit strange? *Woman, what is that to thee and to Me?* [John 2:4] It's almost as if Jesus were saying your prayers mean very little to me. That's only what His words appear to mean. In all truth, says St. Francis de Sales, "He did this that He might give us the example of the patience of His most holy Mother."

"Compassion alone for the Redeemer's sufferings", says St. Alphonsus, is evidence enough to reveal her exemplary patience. Her compassion was heroic to the point of making her "a martyr of patience." Standing at the foot of the cross, Mary suffered spiritually as Her Son suffered spiritually and psychologically.

"If we, then, wish to be the children of Mary," writes St. Alphonsus, "we must endeavor to imitate her in her patience." Quoting St. Cyprian he says, "For what can enrich us with greater merit in this life, and greater glory in the next, than the patient enduring of sufferings?"

We all hope for joy-filled lives, but like roses, we must learn to grow towards eternal happiness in the midst of thorns. For God says to us through the prophet Hosea, *I will hedge up thy way with thorns.* [2:6] "As a hedge of thorns protects a vineyard, so does God protect His servants from the danger of attaching themselves to the earth, by encompassing them with tribulations. Therefore St. Cyprian concludes that it is patience that delivers us from sin and from Hell."

Patient suffering is not only keeping us from hell, but it is also one of the secrets to holiness. "It is patience that makes Saints", writes St. Alphonsus. We must learn to bear our crosses in patience; "not only the crosses which come immediately from God, such as sickness [or] poverty, but also those which come from men and women---persecutions, injuries, and the rest."

"Rejoice then," exclaims St. Gregory, "we can be martyrs without the executioner's sword, if we only preserve patience." "Provided only," as St. Bernard says, "we endure the afflictions of this life with patience and joy."

Remember the words of St. Paul, *For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison* (2 Cor. 4:17).

St. Teresa's instructions on this subject are beautiful. She used to say, "Those who embrace the cross do not feel it;" and elsewhere, "that if we resolve to suffer the pain ceases."

When we begin to feel the weight of these crosses in our day-to-day lives, St. Alphonsus suggests we "have recourse to Mary, who is called by the Church 'the Comfortress of the afflicted;' and by St. John Damascene, 'the Remedy for all sorrows of the heart.'"

Ah, my most sweet Lady, thou who wast innocent didst suffer with so much patience; and shall I, who deserve Hell, refuse to suffer? My Mother, I now ask thee this favor---not, indeed, to be delivered from crosses, but to bear them with patience. For the love of Jesus, I entreat thee to obtain at least this grace for me from God; from thee do I hope for it with confidence.

Questions to guide your meditation:

Mary was innocent, free from all sin, and yet she suffered patiently. Should I, a sinner, refuse to suffer? Do I have any "right" to complain of my suffering? Do I realize that in complaining about my sufferings in a selfish way costs me an *eternal weight of glory*? Is temporal comfort and ease really worth more than eternal glory in heaven?

Mary was constant in her patience. Where am I struggling to be patient? Is it with someone? Is it with myself? Is it in relation to God's will? How can I improve? What needs to change to help me acquire the virtue of patience?

- Today's Prayer -

My Mother, I now ask thee this favor---not, indeed, to be delivered from crosses, but to bear them with patience. For the love of Jesus, I entreat thee to obtain at least this grace for me from God; from thee do I hope for it with confidence.

Hail Mary, full of grace...