

4th Easter Sunday Homily, A, May 3, 2020
Jn 10;1-10

Dear friends

It is a wonderful image we have of Jesus Christ in the gospel today—the “Good Shepherd” watching over us, protecting us, guiding us through life, standing with us in times of need as our strength, security, and support.

I love Psalm 23 which talks about God as being our support during the dark moments of our lives: “Though I walk through the valley of death, I fear no evil, for you are at my side with your rod and staff that give me courage”

I think those words are often misunderstood. Some people think that if they have enough faith, they can avoid suffering, that somehow Christ can keep life from hurting. But that is not the message I get from the second reading today.

Peter suggests that our suffering is acceptable to God. Life is full of unpleasant things: fear, worry, sorrow, anger, loneliness, physical and mental anguish. We can't escape it.

With faith, we still have those things in our lives. But, we also have a special friend to share them with us, a friend who understands because he has suffered through them as well.

That friend is Jesus Christ, our Savior, who suffered and died on the cross for our salvation. Jesus Christ can't take away the tough or painful things in your life, but he can be there with you and give you courage and make you feel a little more safe, and a little more secure.

In the second reading St. Peter discusses the role of suffering in the Christian life. He knew all about suffering. Peter was a real authority on the subject. He gave up everything he had to follow Jesus.

Peter went to Rome. Because of his love of Jesus, Peter was crucified to death, upside down, because he loved Jesus so much. He must have died a happy man.

If any of you are experiencing difficult times in life right now, I would suggest that you read the two books of Peter in the New Testament. They are the best books of all. They are both very short, easy to read, and carry a wonderful message.

Peter says that you can't escape suffering in life, so why try?

In fact, since you have to suffer anyway, why not do it for Jesus Christ and glorify his name through it.

I think that's a beautiful thought. Listen again to Peter's words from today's second reading:

“If you put up with suffering for doing what is right, this is acceptable in God's eyes. It was for this that you were called, since Christ suffered for you in just this way and left you an example to have you follow in his footsteps.”

Each one of us is spiritually hungry. We need the spiritual bread that Jesus offers each one of us. He gives us strength, courage, peace, joy, and spiritual fulfillment, to name just a few of His gifts.

Jesus, the Apostles and all saints should inspire each one of us. Jesus encourages us to take on suffering and sacrifice for the good of others. The Eucharist should make us less selfish, help us to love others more, and care for the needs of those who are hurting.

Jesus loves each one of us very much. He proved his love by dying on the cross for us.

But this is Easter. He is no longer dead. He is alive and living within our hearts. He asks us to be his body. To do his work in the world. To take on a bit of suffering for those in need.

Jesus' last words in today's gospel are these: "I came that you might have life and have it to the full!"

Father Damian, the apostle of the Lepers of Molokai, was one day washing a particularly bad sore of a leper. The leper, genuinely distressed at the Father's coming close to him so fearlessly, could not refrain from remarking to him; "Be careful, father, you might easily catch the disease." "

My dear child," answered the priest, "if the disease robs my body, God will give me another."

God wants you and me to continue His works on earth. To accept "Jesus" means to acknowledge that He is our Shepherd, our leader, our guide, our protector, and our model. To follow Him means to live like Him, to be transformed by His Spirit.