

Our first reading from the Book of Wisdom, written in beautifully poetic language, packs with it a powerful punch. It reminds us that nothing could remain without God willing its existence, and that nothing that God creates does He loathe. All creation is good.

So why is there so much evil in the world, many ask? It is a paradox to be sure, but good theology is all about making distinctions. St. Bonaventure explained that God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it.”¹ It is Catholic doctrine that creation is fundamentally good. We know this from the very first pages of Sacred Scripture. Creation shares in God’s goodness, which is why the sacred Scriptures reveal that after He created the world, “God saw that it was good...very good” (Gen. 1:4ff).

The Book of Wisdom speaks of the goodness of God’s creation while at the same time reminding us that He preserves that same creation. We are held in being by His will, and in thanksgiving for that gift of our existence, the author is asking us to reflect on how we show forth due respect to the Lord and His precepts. It is a valid question. God has done so much for us; how do we repay Him? But what if you are of the view that God has not done very much for you– that in fact, He seems quite absent from your daily life, or that you have suffered greatly? These are valid, though painful realities that we must be willing to face.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux lived a beautiful life of deep prayer, and yet suffered from tuberculosis for more than a year before her untimely death while just in her early twenties. During that time, she relates that the Lord made known to her that some souls have lost their faith, an insight which moved her with great compassion. She offered her sufferings for others.

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 293, quoting St. Bonaventure, In II Sent. I, 2, 2, 1.

If God permits an absence of joy in our hearts, there has to be a reason for this. Perhaps there is something in store for us at a later time; perhaps in uniting our suffering to the Lord, we offer that suffering on behalf of another, someone who is hurting, someone who is in need. Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said that there is nothing worse than wasted suffering.

He said: “The great tragedy of the world is not what people suffer, but how much they miss when they suffer. Nothing is quite as depressing as wasted pain, agony without an ultimate meaning or purpose.”²

If we must suffer, may we offer it for some greater good or for the good of another. Rather than lament your own difficulties, real as they may be—what about redirecting those feelings into something more productive?

In this month of the holy souls, we are mindful of our union with all who have gone before us. Do we pray for our beloved dead? Do we consciously call them to mind in prayer? Do we call them to mind? And even in a few cases, are we willing to forgive and forget past hurts with these people, once for all? How long do we desire to hold a grudge?

Think of the souls who have no one to pray for them. Make time this week to visit a cemetery and pray at the grave of a relative. Directing your spiritual energies this month towards others, those who have departed this life and who may be undergoing the purifying fire of purgatory, on their way to the glories of heaven.

I realize that this morning I am asking far more questions than I am giving answers. However, I believe that the month of November is best lived spiritually when we unite ourselves to the fullness of the Church in all her members— the church militant, suffering and triumphant. The Communion of Saints is a treasure of our faith. Let us utilize it, thus making it profitable both for ourselves and for our loved ones.

² Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, “On Being Human: Reflections on Life and Living”