

**HOMILY 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time**  
**July 20, 2025**

I came across something this past week and I would like to share it with you today:

If you can start the day without caffeine,  
If you can always be cheerful ignoring aches and pains,  
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,  
If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,  
If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time,  
If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,  
If you can conquer tension without medical help,  
If you can relax without liquor,  
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,  
then you are probably a dog.

Life is hard sometimes, it is very good but it is sometimes hard and involves suffering. By changing how we look at suffering we may be able to make suffering more palatable even without caffeine, drugs, alcohol, complaining and medical intervention.

In the second reading, St. Paul says “I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.” Rejoice in suffering, really? I think he is saying that he can rejoice in suffering because of the good that comes from it. Some things in life clearly cause suffering. Take the death of the young children recently because of the floods in Texas. Where is the suffering? If we believe what we say we believe the children are not suffering. They are now in heaven with God. They could not be in a better place. The parents and families of the children are clearly suffering and they will be grieving for a long time and they will never be the same. We feel horrible because we empathize with the people involved and that is a really good thing. Recent studies have shown that we are losing the capacity to empathize with others and that is disturbing. I do not think that God causes suffering, but I do not always understand why God allows these things to happen. I just have to accept that God is God and I am not. But God makes good things happen from the suffering. God does not waste anything. What is the good that will come from the death of those children in Texas? My guess is that we will develop better ways of warning people in the future so they can prepare. My guess is

that conditions will change in Texas to make things safer if a flood like this ever happens again. And have you ever encountered a mother who is determined to protect her children, let alone a group of mothers. I would not want to stand in their way.

And maybe the things we think of as suffering are not suffering at all. In the Gospel reading we hear about Martha and Mary. Jesus is visiting, Martha is serving and Mary is sitting at his feet listening to him. Martha is complaining to Jesus and trying to bring him into a family squabble between the two sisters. We tend to sympathize with Martha because she seems to be doing all the work and Mary is just sitting there. She is serving Jesus but there is no joy in her service. Jesus points out that she is anxious and worried about many things. When we think of our activity as suffering it causes us to be anxious and worried and it sucks all of the joy out of the activity. With this type of activity it is better to look at it as an opportunity rather than suffering. Can you imagine getting the opportunity to physically serve Jesus while he was on earth? I would not be worried or anxious about that. And think of the things you have accomplished in your life. Did any of them happen without some hard work and suffering? Without “opportunities” life would become pretty boring and we would become stagnant.

And why do we think that Martha had the more difficult part? My guess is that Jesus was challenging Mary, giving her some “opportunities.” Jesus was always challenging people. How difficult is it to sit and listen to someone tell you something you do not want to hear, challenging you to do something you don’t want to do, something you know will be very difficult? And it makes it worse when you know they are absolutely right. And to sit and listen without complaining, blaming or attacking the person. Maybe Martha had the easy part.

Life is hard at times, but it is very good. And maybe we can better accept the suffering if we trust that God will bring something good from it. And maybe what looks like suffering at first glance is not suffering at all. Maybe it is an opportunity.