

“Growing in the gift of gratitude by embracing our Cross with the Lord for the good of souls”

1. **How we deal with the mystery of suffering, in all its forms is the key to growing in holiness.** Because we are all sinners, we all need to be purified of sin in order to someday enter into God’s eternal kingdom. How does this come about in God’s holy plan? Well He uses the reality of the suffering in this life, because of the effects of sin, to bring about this noble project. Be it physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual, whatever type of suffering we have to deal with, and it varies on a daily basis, is **an opportunity**: *if we unite it with Jesus in our daily morning offering of our day, as well as during the day through acts of prayer/surrender.* God will use this daily suffering to purify our soul over time, both in reparation for our past sins, but also to clear the ground of our soul, so the Holy Spirit and His gifts received in Baptism and Confirmation can shine forth in our life more and more. The goal is to eventually become a saint – if we cooperate generously with God in this noble task – or at least to get closer toward that goal in this earthly life, and then finish up this necessary spiritual project in Purgatory after we die – but it is better to fully cooperate now and grow in grace and spiritual merit in light of eternity.

2. **In order for us to fully benefit from this spiritual purification process, we have to have the right attitude.** Our tendency as humans is to complain/be frustrated about our lot in life in whatever we are dealing with: *personal interior/exterior sufferings, or dealing with problems at work, in our family, in our relations with other people, etc.* With the help of God’s grace we can catch ourselves when we are doing this, and turn to God in prayer/surrender, in order to develop a more holy attitude of docility to the Holy Spirit: to realize that everything we go through in daily life is an opportunity to show our love for God and neighbor. As St. Paul says so beautifully in the 2nd reading today, *“I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory.”* The goal of everything we do in this earthly life, as part of our calling in Christ, is to lead both our self and others to the gift of salvation through the gift of our Catholic Faith – so we are called to be **patient and generous** in our love for others, esp. when they are not very lovable because of sin and selfishness. We can only do that with the strength that comes from God alone - and

the sooner we realize that, in humility of heart and mind, the better. Tapping into the graces of *Mass and Confession, Eucharistic adoration, and the daily praying of the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet* helps us immensely in this regard.

3. **Finally we are not going to grow much in daily spiritual union with the Lord if we do not have a spirit of gratitude.** In our fallen state, without us cooperating with God's grace, we tend not to be grateful but take far too many blessings for granted. Humanly speaking you see this when far too many people, young and old alike, don't even say thank you when a kind deed is shown to them. Far too many people have an "entitlement mentality", in which they think they deserve the good things that happen to them, and in fact they think they should have more, and so they are not just ungrateful for the good things in life, but are bitter because they don't have more – as they deserve it, right?! We as followers of Christ must be different – if we want to become holy as God is holy - which is the ultimate goal of the Christian life: to reflect God's goodness in everything. You see this dynamic play out both in the 1st reading and in the Gospel today. In the 1st reading the pagan King Naaman is giving the prophet Elisha a hard time on how he should be cured of his leprosy. Is that not insane? King Naaman should be amazed and grateful that there is even a possibility that God can cure him of that horrible disease. Finally he reluctantly gives into the prophet and sees the amazing goodness of the one true God who cures him. Then in the Gospel, Jesus again in amazing kindness cures 10 lepers and yet only 1 guy who was a foreigner, a Samaritan, came back to thank Jesus. Obviously the other 9 sadly had that **entitlement mentality**: *that God's curing them I guess was the least He could do since He allowed them to have a tough lot in life. Really?!* We, as disciples of Christ, have to be so careful we don't fall into that same spiritual trap and instead every day thank God for the immense blessings in each of our lives, and to never take them for granted, and even to thank Him for the sufferings He either ordains or permits us to go through, for the ultimate salvation of our soul and for the salvation of other souls – if we daily unite our crosses with Jesus. **Our Lady of Fatima**, *who showed the miracle of the sun (Oct 13), and who called us thru the 3 shepherd children to live a daily life of generous prayer and sacrifice for the salvation and conversion of souls in mortal sin, and for our own souls, pray for us.* God bless you.