

Homily
Memorial of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)
September 23, 2023

Every few months I visit my dad over in Indianapolis and spend the day with him. My wife and I joke about how most of our conversation revolves around his ailments. If I didn't know any better, I'd say he already passed away and he just hung around to keep telling us about it. I find myself now talking about my own ailments; my back, my knees, my shoulder and neck, even those things that aren't physical, like my job, which can be a real pain in the...

As we look around our beautiful Family of God, especially those who have gone before us, specifically those we remember as saints, we realize that suffering, great suffering, is not only a part of all our lives, but the best of them are remembered not for their suffering, but for the great and wonderful things they did and said in their lifetimes, in spite of that suffering.

Today we remember St. Pius of Pietrelcina, or Padre Pio as most of us know him. He suffered greatly in his life, most notably from his stigmata. He also suffered from tuberculosis, which got him discharged from military duty. And he suffered emotionally and spiritually from unscrupulous people who started rumors about his making prophecies and being restricted from celebrating Mass and hearing confessions. He also saw the suffering of those he ministered to. This led to his urging the construction of a 350 bed hospital, 'House for the Alleviation of Suffering.'

Jesus stresses that, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Again, we have a choice; just as we can choose to do good or do evil, we can choose to focus on ourselves and our own sufferings, or we can, "pick up our cross." In doing so, we store up treasures in heaven; we alleviate the sufferings of others; we build up the Family of God.

When I look at myself, I can focus on my ailments, those things that make me wonder, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Or I can look at the gifts God has given me, those things that make me who I am, those things that make you who you are; those things that make us special. And then we consider how we can take these gifts to make this world a better place, to help alleviate the suffering around us. It doesn't take much; a small gesture, a simple effort, a genuine smile. We know what we need to do.

Today, let us focus on the many gifts God has generously bestowed on us, especially the Sacraments, our Baptism, this Mass, the Sacrament of the Eucharist – the miracle we are about to witness before our very eyes. Christ's suffering was gladly embraced, not because He could point to His wounds and cry, or share how He was mistreated and complain, but because through His sufferings, He destroyed death and restored life. Let us receive Jesus, become one with Him, go out into the world and be Christ for one another.

Today, we join our suffering to His, and rejoice in the Kingdom to come.