

Seeds of Hope, Stories for Lent #19 – *Thorns in the Flesh*

I have been thinking a lot about suffering lately. So many friends and family have shared with me painful, painful things that they are struggling with—serious illness, financial difficulties, struggles in their marriages, family members caught in the grip of alcohol and drug addiction, friends losing loved ones to suicide.

I feel so weak and powerless to be able to help those who come to me even though I'm a priest and I try to be a good listener. Sometimes the amount of pain in our world can just be overwhelming.

I have taken this to the Lord in prayer. It is here I am again and again reminded of what St. Paul himself experienced and relates in Second Corinthians Chapter 12, when he said he spoke of the thorn in his flesh. I imagine each of us has a certain thorn in our flesh of some kind.

Paul prayed as I prayed (and I suspect you pray) that our Lord will remove the thorn of pain and difficult. Paul said, "Three times I begged the Lord that he might remove this and each time God said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you; for in weakness, power reaches perfection."

It would really be something if we could all come to understand that our greatest strength is nothing compared to this Divine strength that we must learn to rely on when we are weak.

St. Paul goes on to say, "So I willingly boast of my weakness so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

It may seem like a paradox that our weakness can be a blessing, but I have come to understand that God's blessings are often disguised as hardships.

And that very hardship, or thorn, becomes an opening up to the power of the Lord to come into our lives which is so much better than we could offer ourselves.

So, today, let's all boast of our weaknesses. And the power of Christ will rest upon us more and more. Let our source of energy be from the Son.

Amen? Amen!

For Further Reflection...

- 1. What are the weaknesses you have been trying to overcome lately?***
- 2. How has the power of Christ ever helped you?***

"Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12: 8-9