



5th SUNDAY of EASTER ***YEAR C – May 19, 2019***

In the first reading today from the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Paul tells us we will suffer if we preach God's word and live our Lord's way. You have heard the expression that suffering builds character. The truth is, it is not because of the suffering, it is in spite of the suffering. Ultimately, it is selfless love that builds character, and that always includes pain and suffering. Learning to love like that is the cross we pick up each day to follow Jesus.

When you find yourself suffering from something over which you have no control, trust God. We probably will never completely unravel the mystery of suffering while we are here on earth. Philosophers and theologians have tried to do that, but they can't answer our questions. We know that some people cause their own suffering but that kind of suffering is not a mystery.

Walk into any children's hospital and you will see the kind of suffering that is not caused by the children. That's the kind of suffering that is a mystery. That's the kind of suffering that invites us to trust God without understanding what it's all about. That's the kind of suffering that puts us through all the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance. Acceptance doesn't mean we understand what it's all about, acceptance means we trust God...even though we don't understand.

That's easier said than done and you can't get to acceptance without passing through the other stages.

In the second reading, from the book of Revelation, we are reminded that on the other side of the bridge of death every tear will be wiped away, there will be no more pain, no more tears, no more suffering, no more death....Do you believe that. It is after all a matter of faith. St. Paul reminds us that here on earth we walk by faith and not by sight.

So, what are we to do until we cross the bridge of death. Jesus tells us in the Gospel. We are to love each other as he loves us. That means we are to be there for each other. It means we are here to help each other.

Do you know someone who is at the stage of denial, or anger, or depression because of undeserved suffering? You can help them, not by pushing them into acceptance before they are ready, but by listening to their story and letting God take it from there.

There is the kind of suffering we inflict on ourselves by making bad decisions. There is the kind of suffering that others inflict on us by their bad decisions. And there's the kind of suffering that falls into neither category.

When you are dealing with the kind of suffering over which you have no control, trust God. The ultimate healing may be on the other side of the bridge of death.

For a few moments in silence, reflect on how you handle suffering of any kind: physical, emotional or spiritual. Where do you go to find meaning?

