



## Day 32: Suffering

### **Jesus, the One who Lays Down His Life**

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:10*

Just after Jesus reveals to his disciples that he is the Good Shepherd, he proclaims, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” (John 10:17-18) The Good Shepherd is not intimidated by suffering or hard things. He is not deterred by “the dark valley.” He is not discouraged in the face of the world’s persecution or resistance. In the face of persecution and tremendous rejection of His identity and mission, Jesus shows a profound self-possession, which allows Him to make radical choices of fidelity to His Father, even when it was hard. When things got difficult, the Father did not have to drag Jesus along the path to salvation unwillingly. Because Jesus lives in deep trust of His Father’s love for Him, He can freely and willingly lay down his life for His sheep. Sons are free to do hard things because they know who their Father is. In this security, they know that nothing, absolutely nothing can take them out of His hands! This allowed the Son of God to face suffering with the courage that overcomes any fear.

### **Mary, the One who Trusts through Suffering**

“The Holy Spirit will come.” (Luke 1:35) This is the promise made to Mary when she wrestles with the proclamation of the angel that she would become the mother of God’s Son. These glorious words will become the refrain of all of Mary’s life. No matter what is to come, “The Holy Spirit will come.” During the anxiety of the flight into Egypt, “The Holy Spirit will come.” During the wedding feast at Cana, “the Holy Spirit will come.” When the Scribes and Pharisees rise up and resist the teaching of Jesus, “the Holy Spirit will come.” During the long road of His passion and death, standing next to the cross, “the Holy Spirit will come.” In the face of the closed tomb that held the dead body of her son, “the Holy Spirit will come.” Suffering, struggle, and persecution are a part of the human condition and every human story. Jesus and Mary were not immune to this human reality. In the midst of their suffering they chose to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit that ushered in the Kingdom of Heaven.

## St. Juan Diego and Us

Do not be afraid of the struggle. This word “struggle” is almost like an anthem in our Franciscan way of life. A dear spiritual father to our fraternity would often remark that the brothers would say, “I’m struggling!” His response, full of wisdom, was simple: “But is it the right struggle?” Our life will always have struggles and even persecutions. We must be clear, however, that these crosses are a part of the gospel way of life. We see this exemplified in Bishop Juan de Zumarraga who experienced persecution by his own people. The Spanish tried to assassinate him because he was protecting the native peoples. Writing to Charles V, Bishop Zumarraga informed him of the great sufferings of the people and of himself and told the King that, “if God does not provide a remedy of his own hand, this land is about to be lost completely.” Imagine what Bishop Zumarraga may have been feeling as he heard Juan Diego’s account of the appearance of Our Lady – was this the remedy that the Lord was providing? Could God have heard his own prayers for the suffering people under his care? Prudently, he made sure to test the apparition and asked Juan Diego for a sign, but when he received the sign of the Tilma, he knelt down in awe, weeping (cf. *Nican Mopohua*, 185-186). It is easy to overlook the Bishop in the story, but Our Lady of Guadalupe came as a response to the suffering he and all the people had patiently endured. Persevere, then, Brother, in trust and confidence amidst suffering, and you too can experience living in the promises of God’s Kingdom.

## Prayer

O Jesus, we adore You, we love You, and we thank You for the gift of Your presence. You are the beloved Son of the Father, Who endured persecution even unto death to save us. Help us to face persecution for Your name's sake. We ask You now to hear this prayer.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of God and Mother of us, draw us close to your heart. You were a refuge for St. Juan Diego as he faced rejection by others. Fill us with courage and strength to live our mission. Please come and fill us with your love.

Amen.

*After reading today's reflection, [pray the Litany of Restoration of Sonship](#).*