

Twenty Ninth Week of Ordinary Time
October 18, 2015

It's a sad and obvious fact that the world we live in is one where people exploit, dominate, corrupt, enslave, lie, cheat, steal, defraud, murder, hate, and all such manner of things. The irony of all of this is that many of these things are done in the name of securing something perceived as good, so evil takes on the semblance of virtue.

All of this is to say that all of our political, social, or cultural problems can never be solved until we understand first that human nature has suffered a mortal wound... that sin exists in our history, our heredity, our environment, in our origins. That's why we have the concept of Original Sin. Not that we're personally responsible for its existence, but we are all infected and affected by it simply because we're born into it.

That's why we each of us are confronted with the enormity of evil, the fantastic and tremendous injustice of sin. There is no way we can avoid questions like: Why do the good have to suffer? If we're good, why do we have to suffer? Do we *have* to suffer in order to be good? How is it that good and evil can co-exist? Why is it that absolute good and absolute evil can co-exist?

These questions have haunted humanity for thousands of years, and we have received few satisfying answers.

So what we are left with is Jesus' question: *Can you drink the cup I shall drink or be baptized in the same bath of pain as I?*

So how can we answer His question? In the end, Jesus is telling us about responsibility and spiritual maturity, to have the willingness to actively realize and confront the evil within ourselves and in our world.

In our day, the culture tells us that we can do anything we want so long as we don't hurt anyone. On the surface, that sounds like an attractive and reasonable moral system. In fact, many people define themselves as Christian in terms of simply being a good person and not hurting anyone. The trouble with

that way of thinking is that with one blow it removes the heart of Christ's moral teaching and reduces being a Christian to a weak sort of "do-gooder."

Another fundamental proposition we hear from the world today is that hurt and suffering are intrinsically and evil. Pain and suffering are to be avoided at all costs...any means of avoiding suffering is morally valid.

If everyone followed the dictates of this pseudo morality, we could never have expected to see a St. John Paul II, a Blessed Mother Teresa, or any of the other saints who throughout our history have responded to evil and actively accepted pain and suffering and hurt for the benefit of others.

The lesson the disciples learned today is that following Jesus means going up to Jerusalem with its Cross and actively willing to face, accept, and confront the evil that's in us and in others.

Again, we're not responsible for all the evil in the world in the sense that we will be held personally accountable for it. We will, however, be held accountable for our ability to respond to evil.

If we are to be authentic, missionary disciples, God expects us to be like His Son, and to love the world enough to save it, not escape from it... to love with a divine love those whom we contact through and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Overcoming evil isn't easy. It involves pain, pain that Jesus accepted and pain that we must also accept. It's the cup from which we all must drink, the cup of salvation that redeems our world. It's the way, the truth, and the life... it's the way of Jesus and it's our way with Him. Alone we can't overcome anything; but with Him we can overcome everything.