

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 26, 2026

The other day I came across a podcast from a Catholic commentator. It was really interesting. He started it out by saying that this was a conversation for ‘serious’ Catholics. Well, what does that mean? If I don't follow his way, I'm not a serious Catholic, right? Then he said, “I'm not trying to say the priests aren't doing their job.” That's a negative argument and it is what you are trying to say. But what he was all about is the fact that priests are preaching too soft homilies. He was visiting a home in another parish and the readings talked about the weed and the wheat and the scriptures talked about throwing the weeds in the fire, but the priest did not preach on hell. So, we need more preaching about hell. And this guy, by the way, wasn't a priest, and I thought it was interesting because, well, he's telling everybody he's not trying to do this. He is doing that, not of his own accord. Who knows what God had that preacher preach on? There are a lot of topics we can preach on. And we as priests spend time in prayer, but who says the priest has to answer to what this guy wants? Well, interestingly enough, I came across another person at the funeral yesterday and he said, “I like homilies that only preach on hell.” Well, all right, Lord, what are you trying to teach me? And it isn't about preaching on hell necessarily.

We do know hell is there, right? It's real, and there are times to preach on it. But the first thing that everybody needs to do is ask, “What do you want me to learn from this, Lord?” Priests ask, ‘What do you want me to say? What do you want me to teach?’ That's how we are going to prepare for this. So, we're coming into a homily, we have our own ideas because we read the scriptures. And so instead of saying, ‘Lord, I want your priest to preach on this,’ how about,

‘What do you want me to learn from this Word? I am your servant. I am here.’

There are so many things we can talk about in each one of the Scriptures. We don't have time. I could be preaching on hell again today with these scriptures. Death, judgment, heaven, or hell. We are all going to die. They'll be a judgment; there will be heaven or hell. But that's towards the end of the liturgical year and I will be preaching on that at Advent, trust me.

Well, one of the things that I prepared for today's homily is that there are few who are able to go through life without something painful happening to us. In fact, I would say it's almost impossible for us to get through life without getting some deep wounds that are left on our soul. We can even talk about when someone says, you know, physically, it's worse to be beaten than manipulative and verbal abuse. And I'll ask them, what will last longer? The broken leg or the emotional damage that is left behind? That's another discussion that we can have. I'm not saying that we need to break anybody's legs, but to be careful about the words we use because they last long.

Now, some of the wounds we are carrying, we bring on ourselves, through our own sinful actions, through disobeying God's commandments, lying, cheating, stealing, pick a vice. Other wounds we suffer from from the hands of others, through their sinful actions, especially through betrayals and various things. And yet other wounds happen through nobody's thoughts, but accidents, car accidents, earthquakes, tornadoes, et cetera. There are things that just happen that mark us. Now, some may tend to write off bad

experiences as being useless. Nothing can be gained from them; there's nothing that you can salvage. They should be forgotten. You know, what happened in the past is in the past, like Rafiki, in the Lion King. It doesn't matter. It is in the past. Once it's gone down the river, it's lost forever. We must forget them and move on, yet we know unresolved issues express themselves in unhealthy ways.

Now, St. Paul gives us another way to view these dreadful experiences. In today's second reading, Paul reminds us that God can turn everything to the benefit of those who love him. Our Lord can bring good out of pain, out of betrayal, out of death. Can and does. Now some take Paul's words here in Romans to mean that all things work out good for those who love Jesus. All things work out good for those who love Jesus. Here in this world, they believe that if one obeys God's law, then one will always be successful. If I'm the person that says, everything's going to be right. I will not suffer at all. No bad, nothing bad will ever happen. Only good experiences will come. This is known as the 'Health and Wealth gospel'. The gospel that ignores the true Gospel when it says, "What they did to me, they'll do it to you." Being true Christians, true Catholics, means we're going to suffer in this life. Unfortunately, that is the result of original sin. And many of us discover the error of the Health and Wealth gospel the hard way: It is not true that no matter how good we are, how much we obey, what we do, bad things still happen. And bad things happen to good people. And good things happen to bad people. That's another homily. Equally false in this belief about the Health and Wealth gospel is that God wills bad things that happen and causes them to happen. 'So therefore, I'm okay to be bad. God willed this.' No, he doesn't. There is a difference between God

allowing bad to happen and God permitting good to happen. Permissive means to will. God has never commanded evil to happen. We don't understand all that God has commanded and all that he says in those scriptures, but it's not evil. There's justice, which is good. And when bad things do happen Christ is there to help. Not only to pick up the pieces and heal us, but to reap the harvest from the wreckage. He can cause that bad to be good for those who love them. It is important to proudly understand what Paul is saying here.

Listen again, brothers and sisters. *"We know that all things work good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."* This passage promises that God causes all things to contribute to our ultimate good, even sickness, failure, persecutions, and death for those who love him. And our Lord Jesus Christ says to you and me, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."* This is how we know we love him if we keep his commandments. Loving God isn't having a warm, fuzzy feeling. It isn't acknowledging that he is our Lord Savior alone. It is keeping his commandments. *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. I and my father will come and love you and remain in you."* If we love God, he can bring good out of all things. Not all things are good our Lord taught for us even if we keep his commandment, even if we love God with all our hearts, all our moving. But for those who do love these, those who keep his word, he turns everything into a spiritual advantage. Everything is used for our good and the ultimate good is what? Heaven; to get us to heaven.

I'd like to take this more, small moment and give a short illustration. There was a king who had a very valuable diamond, and one day an

accident happened, and the diamond got deeply scratched, a groove, ran right through it in morning. The king consulted experts to see if anything could be done to save the diamond. But they told them that it would never be able to be repaired, nothing good could come from it. So, the king locked the diamond up in his vault where it lay hidden and useless for years. You know, unused anyways, can't say useless. Then one day, a skillful diamond cutter, a master engineer in his craft, arrived in the capital and at the king's invitation, he examined the diamond. And after examining it carefully, the expert said, "Your Majesty. I will make the diamond look even more beautiful than it was before the accident." On hearing this, the other diamond craftsman laughed. But the king was delighted and gave him permission to proceed. Bringing all his orders to be to bear on the diamond, the master craftsman proceeded to engrave a beautiful rose on it, using the deep scratch as the stem of the rose. When the king and the other diamonds cutter saw what he had done, they were filled with admiration. It was not a clever cover up. The expert had taken the diamond's deep scratch and transformed it into something beautiful.

In the same way God can help transform the deep scratches in our hearts, the deep wounds in our souls into a beautiful blessing. God can bring good out of anything, even out of our mistakes, failures, sorrows, wounds, and tragedies. Yes, even out of our own sins. Thus, from painful experiences and difficult times, we learn that God is faithful and loving. Our troubles can bring us closer to our Lord if we like the king, trust Jesus. The expert passing with our wounded heart, Christ will transform it into something beautiful. And Our Lord

will give us a new heart to which the beauty of his love can and will rightly shine in the world, darkened by sin.