

Aside from the physical suffering that he underwent, Jeremiah also suffered emotionally. He suffered from the rejection that he received; of course, the people were rejecting the Lord, but Jeremiah got in the way. He suffered because he saw the destruction of the Temple and of the nation coming. The only way to avert this coming disaster was for the people to repent, but they would not. Perhaps the greatest suffering that Jeremiah endured was the loneliness that came with his vocation. It was not just the loneliness of rejection, but the loneliness of being one of the few who really knew what the Lord wanted and what the Lord was doing.

There are those times in our lives in which we feel alone in our suffering. Yet, we are not alone. The Lord Jesus suffers with us and the Mother of God gives us her consolation as well. The saints assist us with their prayers. Yet it is difficult to endure suffering when no other human being seems to care or to understand. What we gain by suffering loneliness is compassion. We may have to suffer alone, but so does everyone else at some point. The more that we try to run away from pain, the less compassionate we will become towards the pain of others.

The struggles that we have are only temporary. It is true that we can feel as if we would never have agreed to something if we knew how much work it would be, how much time it would take, how difficult it would be, etc. Yet, as human beings, we can very easily focus on the negative. We look at how much something is going to cost us, without knowing the joy that comes with it. We can miss a lot of things if we give up at the start. We can gain a lot of things if we don't give up. The Lord is not cheating us, but helping us to look past the negative and focus on the positive. That way, we can endure the work and difficulties instead of quitting.

Maybe it does feel at times like our prayers go unanswered. However, we have already heard from the Lord Jesus about the importance of remaining persistent in our prayer. We might be tempted to give up, to quit on prayer. There are times when our prayers might seem to go unanswered for a long time. But if we keep praying, all of a sudden, things seem to turn around. Those prayers that we offered when nothing seemed to be happening played an important part in something happening.

As we approach the altar, we ask the Lord to keep in mind those in our lives who suffer alone, who feel as if their suffering has no purpose. We also look to the prophet Jeremiah for inspiration as we deal with the anxieties of life. Although he was rejected during his lifetime, after his death, his writings enjoyed great influence. We might think of the martyrs who found solace and comfort in his life and writings. We can learn from him as well.

To understand Jeremiah's complaints, there are a few things to know about the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah had seen a nation that had lost its way and was worshipping idols. He found some hope in the good king Josiah, who had also recognized that the nation had lost its way and wanted reforms. Sadly, this good king was killed in battle, and the nation quickly went back to idolatry. The nation would not repent, and there were false prophets who seduced people into thinking that everything would be fine. Jeremiah suffered because no one would accept the Lord's message.

Jeremiah is different than other prophets, and not just because he suffered so much. His calling was different. For example, Isaiah was called to be a prophet well into his life, like many other prophets. Jeremiah was different; he was called to be a prophet from a young age. He wrote, "The word of the Lord came to me: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you." So, Jeremiah was called at a young age, and no doubt the Lord gave him many graces to prepare him for his prophetic vocation at a young age.

The prophet used his youth as an excuse to not prophecy. "Ah, Lord God, I said, 'I do not know how to speak. I am too young!' But the Lord answered me: Do not say, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you." Already at a young age, the Lord tells Jeremiah that he can expect trouble.

Yet, Jeremiah found the strength to endure this trouble. Jeremiah had the graces he needed from his youth to endure this life of suffering and rejection. The Lord gave him this calling at a young age in part to strengthen him for what was coming. It would be much more difficult for Jeremiah to live a life of ease but then have to endure suffering later. The Lord also called Jeremiah to a difficult life with the help of all the special graces that Jeremiah needed. He did not call Jeremiah to a difficult life and then left Jeremiah to figure out what to do.

Why the Lord calls some to endure a difficult life, or to endure more suffering than others, is a mystery. Although we cannot fully understand why this is the case, we can understand that this is not without some point. We do know that at the troubled time that Jeremiah lived, he was the right man at the right time. The Lord needed someone to do this difficult task. We can hear in the words of Jeremiah that although he did not enjoy the suffering, he also could not abandon the task that the Lord gave to him.