

MAY 22, 2020
Friday of the 6th Week of Easter
John 15: 12-17

“JOY IN AND WITH JESUS”

According to Encyclopedia Britannica “Pain is subjective and difficult to quantify because it has both an affective and a sensory component. Although the neuroanatomic basis of pain reception develops before birth, individual pain responses are learned in early childhood and are affected by social, cultural, psychological, cognitive, and genetic factors, among others. Those factors account for differences in pain tolerance among humans. Athletes, for example, may be able to withstand or ignore pain while engaged in a sport, and certain religious practices may require participants to endure pain that seems intolerable to most people. An important function of pain is to alert the body to potential damage.”¹

In our gospel for today, Jesus talks about grief, pain, and loss. He knows that His death and impending departure to His Father can cause sadness and weeping to His disciples and He must assure them that this is part of the plan of the Father. His departure is giving joy and happiness more than harm. The Holy Spirit will be upon them, the Advocate who will guide, enlighten, lead, and help them to continue the mission of Christ. He told His disciples: “You will have pain but your pain will turn into joy,” an assurance and promise that this pain is temporary because in Him and with Him, the faithful followers of Jesus will be rewarded with ‘perfect joy’ with the Father in the company of saints in heaven. To make it concrete, Jesus compares it with a woman in labor: “When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world.”² Pregnancy connotes new life, birth, new beginning. There is pain but this is nothing compared to the happiness a woman, a mother and father or a parent experience. This feeling of pain won’t last forever because in the end, sorrow will turn

¹ Marcia L. Meldrum, <https://www.britannica.com/science/pain>

² John 16: 21 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

into joy. This was felt by the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: sorrow and pain turned into joy of the Resurrection.

This was also the experienced of St. Rita of Cascia, the saint we remember today, the patron saint of the impossible. “St. Rita of Cascia was a wife, mother, widow, and member of Augustinian religious community. Her holiness was reflected in each phase of her life. Born at Roccaporena in central Italy, Rita wanted to become a nun but was pressured at a young age into marrying a harsh and cruel man. During her 18-year marriage, she bore and raised two sons. After her husband was killed in a brawl and her sons had died, Rita tried to join the Augustinian nuns in Cascia. Unsuccessful at first because she was a widow, Rita eventually succeeded. Over the years, her austerity, prayerfulness, and charity became legendary. When she developed wounds on her forehead, people quickly associated them with the wounds from Christ’s crown of thorns. She meditated frequently on Christ’s passion. Her care for the sick nuns was especially loving. She also counseled lay people who came to her monastery. Beatified in 1626, Rita was not canonized until 1900. She has acquired the reputation, together with Saint Jude, as a saint of impossible cases. Many people visit her tomb each year.”³ Over the centuries, her incorruptible body remained in her shrine in Cascia. For seventy-six years, faithfully and lovingly responded to God’s several invitations and endured and offered all her pain to Jesus and rewarded her joy and happiness in heaven.

My sisters and brothers, whatever we are experiencing today, pain physically or financially, and loss of our loved ones, Jesus is telling us: “So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”⁴ Our pain will be temporary, Jesus Christ is with us. So, let us ask the Lord, through the intercession of St. Rita of Cascia, not to ‘remove’ the pain but we may have the strength to carry it and endure until the end. St. Rita of Cascia, pray for us. Amen.

³ www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-rita-of-cascia

⁴ John 16: 22 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA