

# WHY WOULD A LOVING GOD ALLOW EVIL, PAIN, AND SUFFERING?

Steven R. Hemler, President





# Why Does God Allow Suffering?

1. If God was all-powerful, he could prevent evil and suffering.
2. If God was all-loving, he would want to prevent evil and suffering.
3. If there was an all-powerful, all-loving God, there would be no evil and suffering in the world.
4. But, evil and suffering exist in the world.
5. Therefore, God is powerless, loveless, or non-existent.

# Presentation Outline

- (1) Why does a loving God allow evil human behavior (**moral evil**)?
- (2) Why does a loving God allow disease and natural disasters (**natural evil**)?
- (3) Does suffering have **purpose**?

# Why Does God Allow Moral Evil?

- God created humans with free will.
  - The gift of free will had potential for evil.
- God made sin and moral evil possible, but humans made it actual.
  - Origin of evil when first humans turned away from God and towards selfish desires (“be like gods”).
    - “The Fall” and “Original Sin”
- God did His part perfectly.
  - We are the ones who messed it up.

# Why Does God Allow Moral Evil?

- Why did God give humans free will and allow us to misuse it?
  - Free will is required for true love.
  - True love must involve free choice.
    - Love cannot be forced.
- God wants us to **voluntarily choose** to know, love, and serve Him.
- *Video: Why we have a free will, Rick Warren, Purpose-Driven Life*





# Presentation Outline

- (1) Why does a loving God allow evil human behavior (**moral evil**)?
- (2) Why does a loving God allow disease and natural disasters (**natural evil**)?
- (3) Does suffering have **purpose**?

# Why Does God Allow *Natural Evil*?

- We all experience:
  - Physical pain (e.g., disease or illness).
  - Mental anguish (e.g., death of loved one).
- Many people experience severe suffering from natural disasters.
- Why God allows undeserved suffering is a mystery.
  - Let's look at some possible reasons.



# Why Does God Allow *Natural Evil*?

- Most people self-centered and want to be self-sufficient and in control.
  - Don't want anyone telling us what to do.
- In times of difficulty we may turn to God and seek His help.
  - God is a **vague emergency service**.
  - Called upon only when going gets tough.
- If everything always wonderful, do you think we would need God or seek Him?

# Why Does God Allow Natural Evil?

- Our Creator knows that true happiness lies in our relationship with Him.
  - Find joy when we **align our will** with God's Will.
- Suffering is often the means by which we give ourselves to God and seek His Will in our lives.
  - We may not do this as long as there is any other place to look for happiness.
  - We may not realize God is all we need until God is all we've got.
- *Video: Personal Testimony*



# Why Does God Allow *Natural Evil*?

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is His **megaphone** to rouse a deaf world.”

C. S. Lewis



# Why Does God Allow *Natural Evil*?

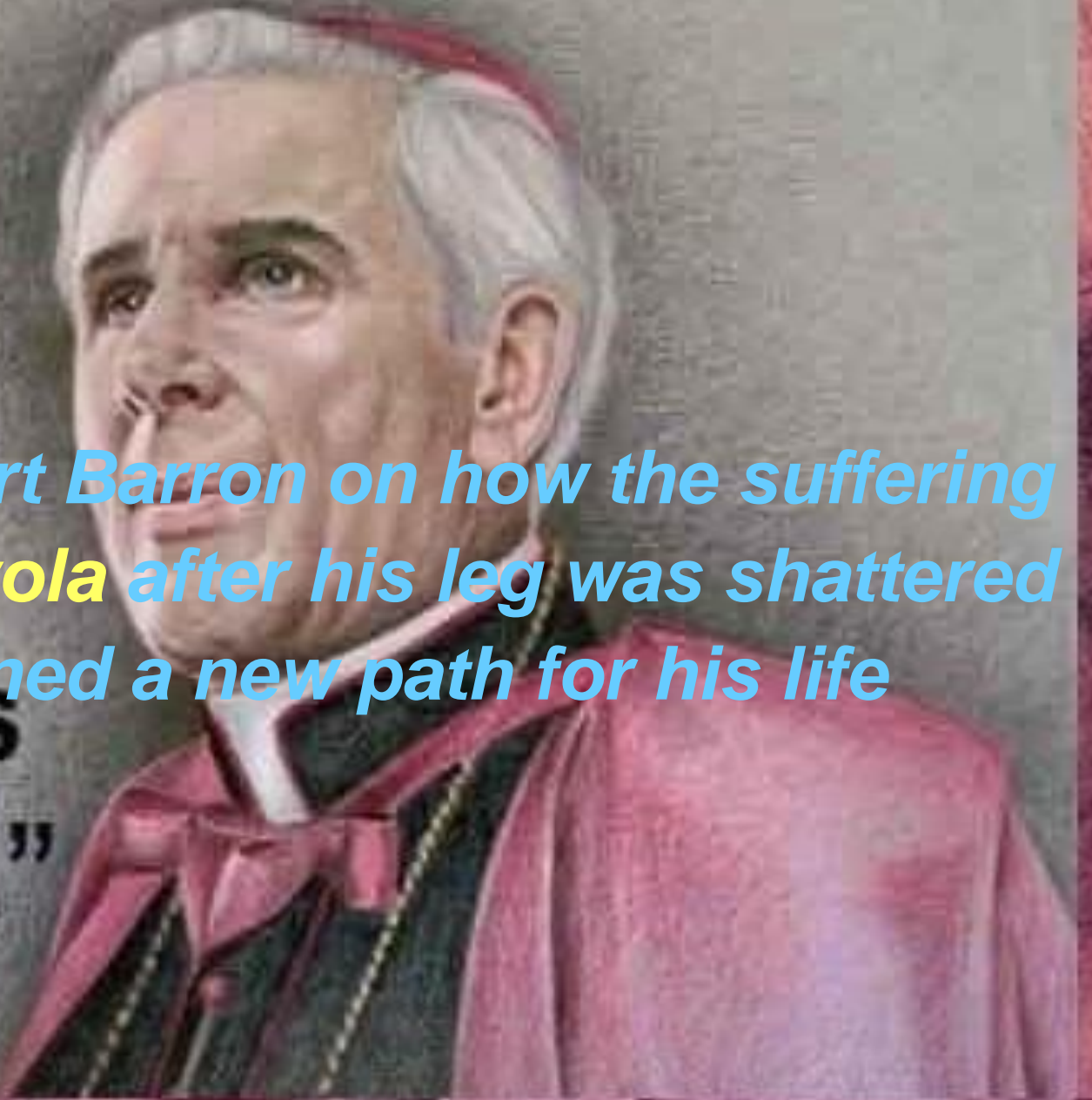


- Our illusion of self-sufficiency and self-control must, for our own sake, be shattered.
- Pain & suffering shatter the illusion.
  - We are reminded we are not center of universe and not in control of our lives.
  - Helps us find proper perspective in life.
    - Abandonment of self-will to God's Will.

**“Sometimes  
the only way  
the good Lord  
can get into  
some hearts is  
to break them.”**

**— Fulton J. Sheen**

*Video: Bishop Robert Barron on how the suffering  
of **St. Ignatius of Loyola** after his leg was shattered  
by a cannonball opened a new path for his life*





# Why Does God Allow *Natural Evil*?

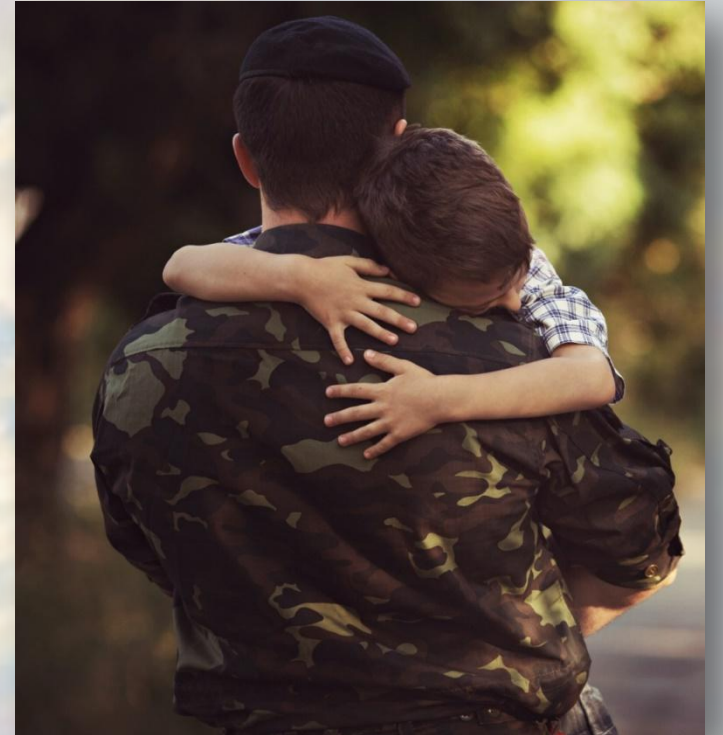
“Why must we suffer? What does it accomplish? The sin of Adam and Eve was to put their will above God’s. This is the essential sin—to prefer our will to God’s will. You can **understand suffering as the medicine needed to right the underlying problem**. If a bone breaks and begins to heal crooked, it must be broken again and set straight. Similarly, we need to uproot our own will and realign it with God’s. The experience of physical or spiritual suffering patiently endured for God’s sake is a most effective way of realigning our will correctly.”

- Ruth Pakaluk, mother of 7, died of cancer at age 41



# Why Does God Allow Natural Evil?

- God can bring good out of disease and natural disasters in other ways.
  - Opportunity to help others and develop **virtues**.
    - Compassion, empathy, unselfishness, charity, generosity...
  - Our own suffering allows us to develop courage, patience, fortitude, endurance, humility...
- St. Augustine: “God judged it better to bring good out of evil, than to have no evil at all.”
- *Video: Why God allows natural disasters*





# Presentation Outline

- (1) Why does a loving God allow evil human behavior (**moral evil**)?
- (2) Why does a loving God allow disease and natural disasters (**natural evil**)?
- (3) Does suffering have **purpose**?

# *Purpose of Suffering*

- If everything were always perfect, we would become lazy, hedonistic & selfish.
- Hardships can be blessings in disguise.
  - Can be catalyst for achieving new heights in our personal and spiritual lives.
- Growth occurs during hard times, times of struggle, pain and suffering.
  - In times of trial we turn to God and seek God's power and presence.



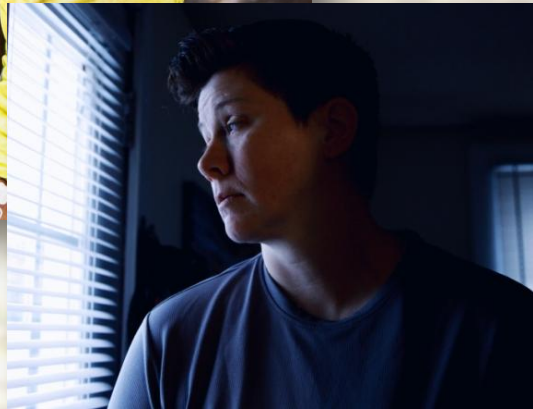
# Purpose of Suffering



- God allows physical suffering to draw us closer to Him and to teach us spiritual truths.
- We learn **wisdom** through suffering.
  - Moral character gets formed through hardship.
  - Swimming **against** the current makes us stronger.
- *Video: Suffering is an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth*



# Purpose of Suffering



- God knows we may need short-term suffering for our long-term good.
  - Spiritual maturity and eternal life.
  - “No pain, no gain.”
- Spiritual growth is **not** automatic.
  - Some people become **bitter**, rather than **better**, when faced with suffering.
  - Adversity can make us or break us, depending upon our reaction.

# Purpose of Suffering

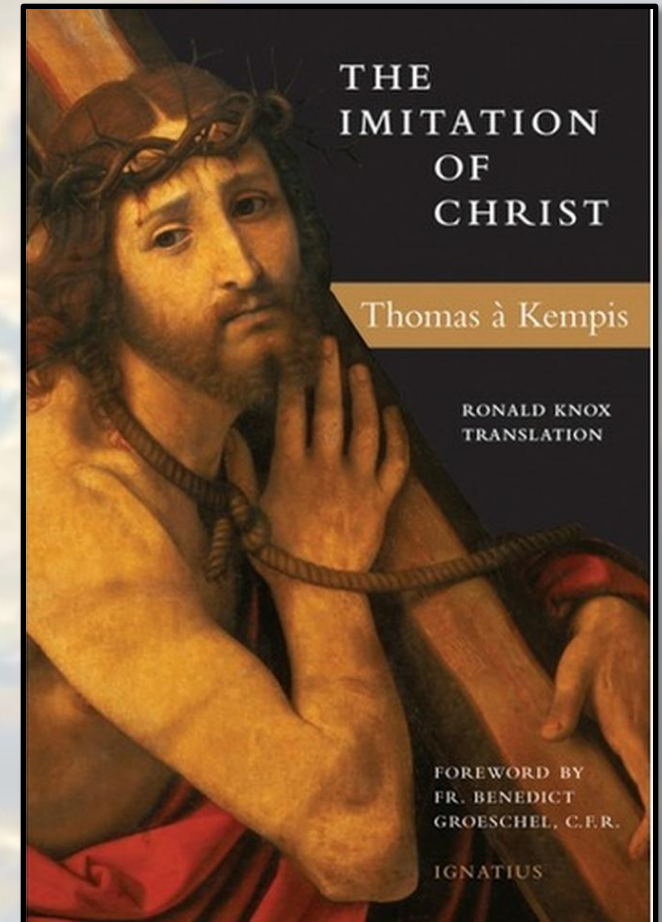


- God can cause good to emerge from evil and suffering.
  - If run **towards** God, instead of away from God.
- “The redemptive nature of suffering”
  - Integral part of Christian discipleship.
  - “Take up your cross and follow me.”
- Christians throughout history have shown how suffering brought them closer to God and made them a better person.



# Purpose of Suffering

- Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*:
  - “When you are troubled and afflicted, then is the time to gain merit.”
  - “In the cross (suffering) there is the **completion of virtue**; in the cross there is the **perfection of sanctity** (holiness).”
  - “There is no health for the soul nor hope of eternal life, except in the cross.”
- *Video: Hope After a Major Loss*





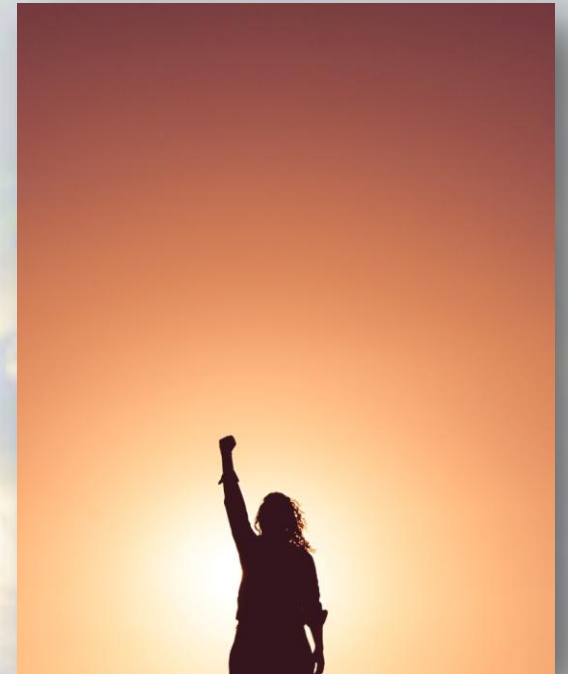
# Purpose of Suffering



- Our problems are “storms on the sea of life that are not meant to sink us, but to **sanctify** us.”
  - Each “storm” is opportunity to **grow closer** to God.
  - As we grow closer, the more we **love** God and develop **trust** in God’s care.
  - The more we love God, the more we desire to **serve** God and others.
  - The more we serve God and others, the **more like God we become**.

# Purpose of Suffering

- Raw gold is dull, dark, and clumpy.
  - Its beauty is only potential.
    - Only after it is melted and poured into a mold, does it make beautiful jewelry.
- God allows trials to “**melt** me, **mold** me, **make** me” into His image.
  - “Trials show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold.” (1 Peter 1:7)
- “**T**emporal (earthly) **t**rials are **p**eople’s **p**ath to **h**eavenly **h**oliness.”
- *Video: Rick Warren on spiritual growth*





# Purpose of Suffering

- Pope St. John Paul II, *On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*:
  - “Suffering must serve for conversion, that is, for the rebuilding of goodness.”
  - “Its purpose is to **strengthen goodness** in man himself and in his relationships with others and especially with God.”
  - “It is suffering, more than anything else, which **clears the way** for the grace which transforms human souls.”



# Offer Up Our Suffering

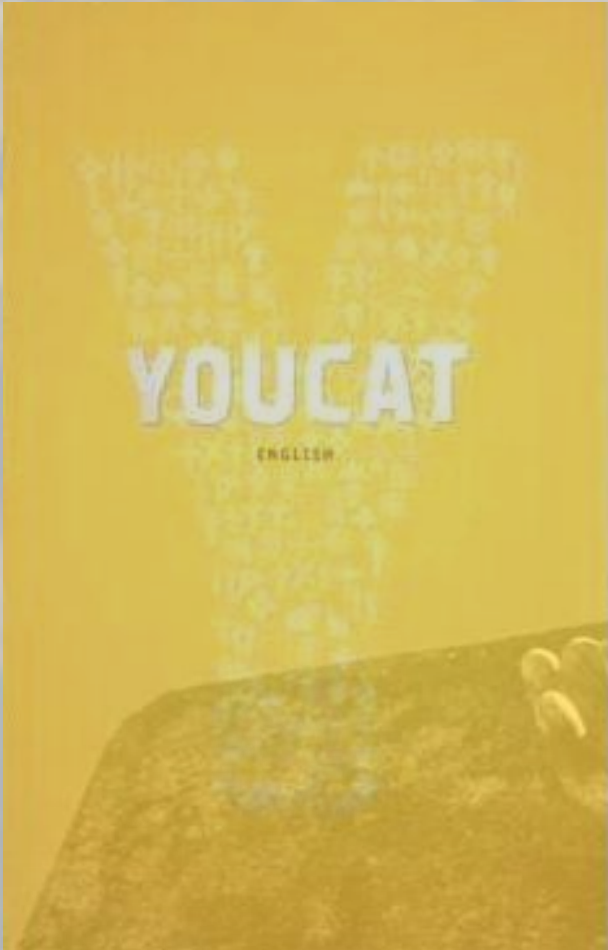
- “Offer up” our suffering for good of others
  - Julie Onderko: “Often those who are aging and suffering do not unite their pain with the redemptive work Jesus did on the cross. Archbishop Fulton Sheen lamented the **‘wasted suffering’** when he would pass by a hospital. He knew that some of the most important work for the salvation of souls could be done from a hospital bed.”
- *Video: Fr. John Riccardo on Suffering*





# Conclusion

- From YOUCAT, *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Question #102):
  - “Christians should not seek suffering, but when they are confronted with unavoidable suffering, it can become meaningful for them if they **unite** their suffering with the sufferings of Christ.”
  - “**In faith** we can accept our own suffering and share the suffering of others.”



# Presentation Summary

- (1) Why does God allow evil human behavior (**moral evil**)?
  - Free will
- (2) Why does God allow disease and natural disasters (**natural evil**)?
  - “God’s megaphone”
  - To bring about a greater good
- (3) Does suffering have **purpose**?
  - Personal and spiritual growth

# The Answer to Suffering

- The answer to problem of suffering is not just an abstract idea, because this is not just an abstract issue.
  - It's a personal issue and requires a personal response.
- The answer to problem of suffering is not just a logical answer, but an **Answerer**.
- The Answerer is **Jesus** himself.

# The Answer to Suffering

- God understands our suffering because He has experienced it.
- Jesus willingly suffered for our good.
  - So we might have eternal life.
- Jesus asks us to love and trust him in all things.
  - Especially in our trials and suffering.
- *Video: Jesus with us in midst of our suffering*



# The Answer to Suffering

- How can we not help but love in return this person Jesus, who:
  - Voluntarily entered into our world.
  - Suffered our pains.
  - Offers himself to us in the midst of our pain and suffering.
- Hebrews 2:18: “Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.”

# The Answer to Suffering

“What we want is God to take away our suffering, but what he does is enter into it. What we want is to live without suffering, but what we need is to live through it.

What we want is an explanation from God, what we need is a relationship with God.

What we want is a pill to take away our pain, but what we ultimately need is a story that gives meaning to our pain.”

– Mark Giszczak, *Suffering: What Every Catholic Should Know*

A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, reflecting the sky and surrounding mountains. The sky is a mix of blue, purple, and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The mountains are dark and silhouetted against the bright sky. The foreground shows a rocky shoreline.

# Closing Song

***“Blessings”***

***by***

***Laura Story***





**CAINA**

Catholic Apologetics Institute of North America

[HOME](#)

[PRESENTATIONS](#) ▾

[VIDEOS](#) ▾

[ARTICLES](#)

[FACEBOOK](#)

[ABOUT](#) ▾



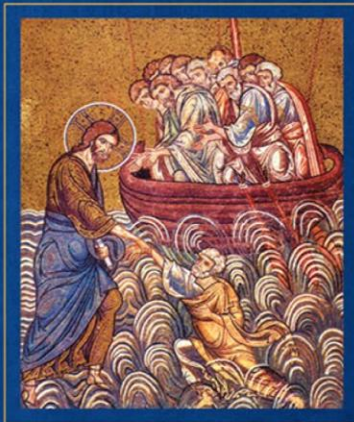
# CAINA<sup>®</sup>

Catholic Apologetics Institute of North America



[www.cainaweb.org](http://www.cainaweb.org)

Catholic  
Stories  
*of Faith and Hope*



How God Brings Good Out of Suffering

AUTHORED AND COMPILED BY

Steven R. Hemler

SEARCH  
NO  
MORE

📍 THE KEYS TO  
TRUTH AND HAPPINESS

STEVEN R. HEMLER

THE  
REALITY  
OF  
GOD

*The Layman's Guide to Scientific Evidence for the Creator*

Steven R. Hemler



***Questions?***

***Comments?***

# WHY WOULD A LOVING GOD ALLOW EVIL, PAIN, AND SUFFERING?

Steven R. Hemler, President



