

Suffering, a Caress from God

St Josemaria recalls the story behind no. 208 in *The Way*: "Blessed be suffering..." He explains that suffering is not evil but a caress from God.

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Many years ago, before any of these districts even existed, I used to go to the King's Hospital, many, many years ago, over forty, where were you all then...?

And I remember that by the bedside of a woman with tuberculosis, - because tuberculosis was a terminal sickness then, like cancer now, there was no cure, - a wretched women who had had a high position in society, because of some difficult circumstances her family had thrown her out, there she lay on a pallet in that hospital - and she was happy, and she made the effort to smile, and she smiled, because smiling was a mortification, but from another point of view it wasn't a mortification, she was smiling at God, thanking him for her suffering, and there I taught her to say this prayer:

"Blessed be suffering, loved be suffering, sanctified be suffering, glorified be suffering." You know it as well as I do. So suffering, my daughter, is not evil, it is bad when it is received with bad will. But when it is received in a Christian way, a

person who is suffering physically or mentally can be very happy, and doesn't go telling everyone how much she's suffering, she keeps it quiet, like a caress from God.

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