

OCTOBER 16 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

And so the argument goes on, and they are trying to catch Jesus. And of course, Jesus makes his point, and how the prophets are uncomfortable people. But God continues to send prophets—people who are uncomfortable for us. Prophets are uncomfortable.

And but also, prophets usually show us the way that we're all one humanity. One humanity—and this is what Saint Paul in Romans is really explaining—that we are, Jews and Gentiles, we're all one. And we all suffer together, and we walk the road together, the road to heaven together. And there's no distinction between us. If you're red, green, blue, yellow... it doesn't matter. We're all one people.

And today's saint, Saint Marguerite d'Youville, very much understood that. And she's also an example of how our suffering—of course, nobody wants to suffer—but how our suffering becomes our greatest gift. I very much can relate to Marguerite. Not that my life is her life, not that I'm a saint—she's a saint, and very much so—but she suffered quite a bit.

She was married off at age 20 to d'Youville, Francois d'Youville, who was not exactly a nice husband. He was in the illegal liquor trade, and he lived a very rough life. And he died after eight years. I don't think it was a great loss for her. It's too bad to say that, but it was.

What really must have touched her is that, by the age of 30, she had lost four children out of six—all dying in infancy. That's very hard on a mother, of course, losing a child, and I cannot imagine how it felt that she lost four children. But it shaped her. It shaped her. And she understood, and she also could see how other people were suffering, and how other women were suffering—in bad marriages, or widows, and so on.

She really started to reach out to the poor in Montreal. And so she got together with some women—actually, at age 36—she got together with three other like-minded women to help the poor in Montreal, and to feed the poor. Because she knew what it feels like. And this is so important in our own suffering history. Suffering, if we can embrace it and let God teach through it, God will use our suffering for the good of the world.

She was not highly educated or whatever, but she evangelized by her work. And of course, she was living in a society, at her time in the 18th century, when women should stay at home and do their thing, and not be out there in the public. And so they were called “Grey”—Grey being basically your prostitutes and drunkards—while she was doing good work.

This is really, so often, what happens: when people are different, or when people do good works, they are persecuted, just like Jesus is pointing out to the Jewish leadership. “You didn’t like the prophets; you killed them...” And so, the Grey Nuns were very much persecuted. It’s a derogatory name—just as, actually, “Jesuits” was a derogatory name initially.

Her official name of the order is “Order of Sisters of Charity of the Hospital of Montreal.” Eventually, as they did good work, they took over the hospital in Montreal and made it run—the hospital, which was basically bankrupt. A number of years later, the hospital burned down, and she and her sisters rebuilt it. She knew how to reach out and to totally give herself to the need of others.

Today also is World Food Day, which was established 80 years ago by the United Nations, in 1945. And it is so important on World Food Day to remember that. Of course, Saint Marguerite d’Youville didn’t have to have World Food Day—she knew how important it was to feed those who have less.

It is good for us to remember World Food Day, that we reach out to those who have so much less than we do. So many people are starving in the world. And of course, the hot spots—Gaza continues to go on, the Sudan, and so on—but so many people are suffering. It's far away from our reality, but they are suffering, and we should be there to look after them, and not be afraid to reach out, following the examples again of the saints before us.

Saint Marguerite d'Youville was one of those examples we should really look at and try to follow, and to emulate. Because she knew that everyone is equal. She was not going to be selective, saying, "You—I like you, and I don't like you." For her, everyone was equal, especially when everyone was suffering.

And it all comes, again, as I mentioned before, through her own suffering history. She learned what it was to be alone in her suffering. And, like I said, I very much can relate to that in my story.

So if you are suffering out there—I don't wish suffering on anyone, of course—but give it to God. Don't be afraid. Let God use our suffering for the good of others. And we just keep praying for those around us, and pray for those who do not like us, or who persecute us, or who call our names. Not to be afraid of it. Sometimes it's just that they're jealous of what we are doing.

Amen.