

A lot of people don't like this gospel because Jesus seems insensitive to those who do housework. It also shows that even if Jesus is coming for dinner, don't expect people to volunteer their help.

Everybody has to get housework done. And really there is no getting done with housework. You always have to clean again. Some people accept this as a fact of life and just do it. Others do it resentfully. (Even when I was in school I fell into that category. If I did not put the dust on the furniture why should I have to clean it up?) But if we are preparing our home for guests, for celebration, or just for the people we love, cleaning house can actually raise spirits.

When you love people you will do things for them. You accept inconvenience. You even suffer, so that others may have a better life.

When people first fall in love, it feels so good that suffering seems to disappear. But in time, they learn that suffering is a part of love. True love gains its strength by working through suffering.

No sane person looks forward to suffering, so it always takes me aback to hear Paul say to the Colossians, "I rejoice in my sufferings." He says he fills up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

The first Christians had to make sense out of suffering. People ridiculed them, hurt them, and degraded them for what they believed, but they saw themselves as the good guys. Eventually they concluded that their sufferings continued the suffering of Christ. The crucifixion opened the hope of glory, but it did not end pain and persecution. Paul says something was still lacking in the afflictions of Christ, and somehow his sufferings continued the message and mission of Jesus.

"I rejoice in my sufferings," he says. He was in love with Jesus and with the Church. He did not notice the inconvenience.

We can put up with inconvenience, but we can only rejoice in sufferings if we have love. We have all expressed this a million times in simple ways to people we love. "I don't mind at all," we say. Or, "It's not a bother." We treat our own suffering lightly when we help someone we love.

Our challenge is to accept suffering with the same spirit. Whether it is arthritis, a broken heart, or plain old housework, suffering becomes lighter if our first motive is truly to love.