**Turning Pains into Gains**

**Susan Uthuppu**

When we go through difficult times in life, God uses some people to bring the hope and peace that only God can provide during a painful time. One of those individuals whom God had used to bring hope and the love of Christ to a broken 21-year-old young woman who was mourning the loss of her eyesight was Chev. Benny Punnathara. God tremendously used this godly man to help me understand how much I’m loved and treasured by my Heavenly Father. I learned about the great works God is doing through Shalom ministry after meeting Br. Benny Punnathara the first time in 2002. Ever since then, this ministry has been a big part of my life in my spiritual journey.

Through Shalom ministry, especially through the spiritual revival retreats that I have attended, God has poured out many convictions and graces to help me come to a more intimate relationship with my savior. Every time I attend a revival event by Shalom, I am more and more convinced about the value of each soul. These events have been an eye opener for me to recognize the importance of praying for the conversion of every soul- not just our own and our loved ones, but also of everyone in this world.

Unlike any other retreats, after attending Shalom’s spiritual retreats, I leave the place with a heavy heart for the salvation of souls. More than any materialistic blessings, you just want to do whatever you can do to gain souls for your Savior who was willing to give up his life for your salvation. After learning about the life of many saints and how they offered their sufferings for the salvation of souls, I came to realize how many souls I can gain for my Lord if I offer my small and big sufferings in union with Jesus’ suffering on the cross and how pleased Jesus will be when we do this for him. In St. Maria Faustina’s Dairy, Jesus tells her- “There is but one price at which souls are bought, and that is suffering united to My suffering on the cross”.

I face many challenges as a blind person in both my personal and professional life. But when I encounter a challenging or difficult situation, rather than being frustrated or upset over that incident, lot of times God would give me the grace to offer them up for the salvation of souls. I am not saying that I am hundred percent successful in this area. There have been many times I have failed to utilize my sufferings for the salvation of souls, especially after the loss of my niece. But even then, once I pass my emotional state of being upset and sad, I would tell my Lord that I’m sorry if I waisted my sufferings and ask him to still accept my pain for the conversion of souls by the merits of his sorrowful passion. God knows our weak and fragile nature, and I believe

He can still use our sufferings no matter how imperfect we are.

Since Shalom plays a major role in spreading the Good News of our Lord to millions of people in the world through television and other media, I offer my sufferings for Shalom to produce very anointed spiritual programs and events so that whoever is watching a program or attending a retreat may come to understand the love of the Savior.

One thing I know for sure is that nothing in our lives happens without Our Heavenly Father’s knowledge or permission, no matter how painful the situation is. If God has allowed a hardship to occur in our lives, it has to be for our good. We may not understand at the time or sometimes until we get to eternity. But even in those instances, we just have to trust in who He is, not in our circumstances. Furthermore, this is a fallen world and we are going to encounter difficult and painful situations in our earthly journey. When unexpected and unpleasant things happen in our lives, we have two choices-either we can waste our sufferings by complaining about it and being mad at God, or gain many souls for our Heavenly Father by offering them up for their salvation in union with Jesus’ suffering on the cross.

In her Diary, St. Faustina wrote- “I saw the Lord Jesus nailed upon the cross amidst great torments. A soft moan issued from His heart. After some time, He said “I thirst. I thirst for the salvation of souls. Help Me, my daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the Heavenly Father for sinners.” Since offering our sufferings in union with His passion on the cross is one of the best ways we can help to ease our Lord’s sorrow and gain souls, let us make best use of our pains and difficulties in life from now on.