

WEEKLY MEDITATION

In our Epistle lesson today (2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9), St. Paul speaks of suffering from a 'thorn in the flesh.' There are many different theories as to what exactly this 'thorn' was, but ultimately, no one knows. Whatever it was, we know that it caused St. Paul problems. It hindered him and caused suffering in his life. Yet when St. Paul prayed and asked God to remove it, God answered his prayer alright – with a 'No!'

The reason God answered 'no' to St. Paul's request seems very clear: the thorn was actually good for St. Paul! But initially St. Paul did not know this! Later on, however, he came to understand that the thorn was there to 1) keep him humble, and 2) help him to continue to rely on God rather than on himself. In fact, God said to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." The greatest saints had no 'spiritual muscle' of their own, it all came from God as they let him live through them. So whatever our 'thorn', and many of us have them, whatever our problems and suffering, if we are in Christ, then we know that it is for our ultimate good. And if our thorn gets too painful, we can remember him who wore a crown of thorns and endured fearful crucifixion for us and for our salvation, and our thorn will indeed begin to look smaller. Ultimately, God is calling us to trust him, to remember that he knows what he is doing, and always has our best interests in mind.

Fr. Stacey

