

There is a legend about a bird that sings just once in its life, more sweetly than any other creature on earth. From the moment it leaves the nest it searches for a thorn tree, and it does not rest until it finds one. Then singing among the savage branches, it impales itself on one of the sharp spines. While dying it rises above its own agony to out-sing the lark and nightingale. The best is only brought about at the cost of great pain.

That classic story is a good metaphor for our celebration of All Saints, for it says that the greatest things we accomplish in life require some amount of suffering. The greatest lessons we learn often come through pain and failure. These are the lessons that the saints can teach us.

It is a lesson we hear in Matthew's gospel account of the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. The Lord provides nine different situations, many of which are challenging and necessitate suffering, but all of which we encounter at some point in our life. Sometimes we are the poor on spirit; sometimes we are those who sorrow. Sometimes we hunger and thirst and sometimes we are

called peacemakers. Sometimes we are insulted and persecuted for what we believe. But in the end Jesus says, “Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great.”

The saints were people like you and me. They found themselves challenged by the Beatitudes; they were forced to endure and suffer. But because they never gave up and they saw purpose behind their suffering, they were persistent and now stand with God. While we marvel at these saints we should realize that the qualities they demonstrated are the same ones we seek in our life. I mean no one seeks to suffer but yet we live in a world that seeks the easy, trouble free route; But the greatest accomplishments of life come through endurance and suffering.

So today let us seek to be saints by understanding the need to suffer and endure as the bird in the thorn bush demonstrated. Let us believe that suffering leads to greatness and this is a song that brings us to God.