

## Going to the Peripheries

We see it in the eyes of the homeless man that we pass by on our way home from work. We hear it in the heart-wrenching stories that constantly play on the news. We feel it in the silence as we sit with a beloved family member or friend who is in pain. No matter how we experience it, we as Catholics witness the suffering of humanity on a regular basis. In a world that sometimes appears to be dominated by human suffering, it is vital now more than ever for the Catholic Church to embrace its mission of alleviating the pain of suffering humanity. In order to do so, we must go to one of the most sacred places in our world: the peripheries of our society.

Going to the peripheries was at the very cornerstone of Jesus Christ's public ministry. Throughout his life, Jesus extended himself to all those who were suffering, offering his mercy and love to even the greatest outcasts of society. Jesus even faced the pain of human suffering firsthand through his death on the cross. It was through this action that Jesus was able to eternally unite himself with suffering humanity, and it is what allows him to live with us wherever there is suffering today. As his disciples, it is our responsibility to follow Christ to these places of suffering and ensure that he is not at the peripheries alone.

As human beings, it can be difficult for us to go to the peripheries with which we are unfamiliar or afraid of. Oftentimes, however, the peripheries that are most in need are the ones waiting for us right here in our own communities. Although we may not always recognize it, there are people all around us who face forms of suffering every day. Wherever the poor, the ill, the outcast, or the forgotten exist, Catholics have the responsibility to be present there as well. Inspired by the leadership and example of the Church, we can all be empowered to offer healing in the peripheries and help put an end to the suffering of humanity.

With this being said, I am truly blessed to have someone in my life today who continuously works to alleviate human suffering. My mother, a nurse who works at Milford Hospital on the Medical Surgical/Oncology unit, is a perfect example of someone who is leading the movement of going to the peripheries. My mother does not see nursing merely as job; rather, she sees it as her true vocation and is motivated solely by the desire to help those in need. The patients whom my mom encounters in the hospital are generally very ill, have cancer, or are nearing the end of their lives. No matter what conditions her patients are in, my mother treats each one with the dignity and respect that every human being deserves. While others might simply pass them by, my mother sees the value in each person and provides them the best care within her capabilities. While she can only do so much for their physical suffering, I believe that my mother alleviates both emotional and spiritual suffering through the boundless mercy and kindness that she shows. Through her work, my mother has inspired me to join in going to the peripheries by volunteering at my local hospital. There, I have the opportunity to follow in her footsteps and show compassion to patients who are suffering, whether it be by lending a caring ear or offering a word of encouragement as they journey through this difficult time.

Furthermore, for every one person that chooses to go to the peripheries, another one is bound to follow close behind. Together, rooted with faith in Christ, Catholics have the ability to set an example for all of the world to work toward alleviating human suffering. By tending to the needs of those on the outskirts of our society, we take a crucial step in the mission of elevating human dignity and ultimately easing the suffering that so many people in this world face.