Lesson 15 – The Holy Spirit’s Gift – To Bear the Fruit of Patience

How has our Father shown his patience and long-suffering with his people and with us?
How can exercising the gift of patience make us more like Jesus?
What are the three different aspects of patience?
What three conditions should be observed in order to exercise patience properly?

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Patience (Long-suffering)

Sometimes we encounter people who simply try our patience. And sometimes, rather than change the source of our vexation, the Spirit wants to transform us by changing us into longsuffering people. He does this because he wants us to better mirror God's love. Unfortunately, instead of patiently forbearing with others, we sometimes react with animosity and hostility. Having forgotten how patient God has been with us, we are tempted to return evil for evil and escalate the turmoil in our relationships.

Since we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, God has called us to reflect the mercy and grace we have experienced through Christ. He suffered for us so that we might realize that God loves us unconditionally and so that we might be healed. Similarly he often calls us to follow his example and endure the faults of others in a gracious manner so that they too might be healed as they realize that they are loved in spite of their sin. Of course, God never wants us to remain in situations in which we are being abused, physically or emotionally. But often, relating with our families or with those with whom we work simply requires us to exercise God's gift of patience and humility.

The Greek Translation

Generally speaking the word [Makrothurnia} is not used of patience in regard to things or events but in regard to people. Chrysostom said that it is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and does not, the man who is slow to wrath.
—William Barclay - The Daily Bible Study Series

God's Patience with Us

1. No one has had greater patience or long-suffering with us than God himself. Psalm 106 describes Israel's often erratic response to God and God's immense patience with his people. By meditating on God's response to Israel, we can gain valuable insight as to what long-suffering truly means.

a) Based on Psalm 106 attached, Identify three or more ways in which God's people sinned against him and tested his love and patience.
(b) Although Israel provoked God's anger, how did God show long-suffering toward Israel?

(c) Share a situation in which God showed his patience with you.

There are some who remain at peace with themselves and also with others. And some neither have peace in themselves nor allow others to have peace. Such people are a trouble to others, and an even greater trouble to themselves. And there are some who are at peace with themselves, and who try to guide others into peace. But all our peace in this present life should depend on humble forbearance rather than on absence of adversity. He who knows the secret of endurance will enjoy the greatest peace. Such a one is conqueror of self, master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of Heaven. —Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ

**Suffering Patiently Makes Us More like Jesus**

2. Long-suffering involves how we respond to misbehavior and mistreatment that normally would warrant frustration, anger, or retribution. Reflect on 1 Peter 3:13-18 attached, and then answer the following questions.

(a) According to these verses, how should we react when we are unfairly attacked?

(b) Why do you think Christ's sufferings are highlighted here (verse 18)?

(c) Why should we desire to have the fruit of long-suffering?

(d) Where in your life do you most often have occasion to be long-suffering?
PSALM 106
Israel’s Confession of Sin

1 Hallelujah!

A
Give thanks to the LORD, who is good,
whose mercy endures forever.
2 Who can recount the mighty deeds of the LORD,
proclaim in full God’s praise?
3 Blessed those who do what is right,
whose deeds are always just.
4 Remember me, LORD, as you favor your people;
come to me with your saving help,
5 That I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,
rejoice in the joy of your people,
and glory with your heritage.

B
6 We have sinned like our ancestors;
we have done wrong and are guilty.

I
7 Our ancestors in Egypt
did not attend to your wonders.
They did not remember your manifold mercy;
they defied the Most High at the Red Sea.
8 Yet he saved them for his name’s sake
to make his power known.
9 He roared at the Red Sea and it dried up.
He led them through the deep as through a desert.
10 He rescued them from hostile hands,
freed them from the power of the enemy.
11 The waters covered their oppressors;
not one of them survived.
12 Then they believed his words
and sang his praise.

II
13 But they soon forgot all he had done;
they had no patience for his plan.
14 In the desert they gave in to their cravings,
tempted God in the wasteland.
15 So he gave them what they asked
and sent a wasting disease against them.

III
16 In the camp they challenged Moses
and Aaron, the holy one of the LORD.
17 The earth opened and swallowed Dathan,
it closed on the followers of Abiram.
18 Against their company the fire blazed;
flames consumed the wicked.
IV
19 At Horeb they fashioned a calf,
worshiped a metal statue.
20 They exchanged their glory
for the image of a grass-eating bull.
21 They forgot the God who had saved them,
who had done great deeds in Egypt,
22 Amazing deeds in the land of Ham,
fearsome deeds at the Red Sea.
23 He would have decreed their destruction,
had not Moses, his chosen one,
Withstood him in the breach
to turn back his destroying anger.

V
24 Next they despised the beautiful land;
they did not believe the promise.
25 In their tents they complained;
they did not heed the voice of the LORD.
26 So with raised hand he swore
he would destroy them in the desert,
27 And scatter their descendants among the nations,
derperse them in foreign lands.

VI
28 They joined in the rites of Baal of Peor,
ate food sacrificed to the dead.
29 They provoked him by their actions,
and a plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas rose to intervene,
and the plague was brought to a halt.
31 This was counted for him as a righteous deed
for all generations to come.

VII
32 At the waters of Meribah they angered God,
and Moses suffered because of them.
33 They so embittered his spirit
that rash words crossed his lips.

VIII
34 They did not destroy the peoples
as the LORD had commanded them,
35 But mingled with the nations
and imitated their ways.
36 They served their idols
and were ensnared by them.
37 They sacrificed to demons*
their own sons and daughters,
38 Shedding innocent blood,
the blood of their own sons and daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
desecrating the land with bloodshed.
39They defiled themselves by their actions, became adulterers by their conduct.
40So the LORD grew angry with his people, abhorred his own heritage.
41He handed them over to the nations, and their adversaries ruled over them.
42Their enemies oppressed them, kept them under subjection.
43Many times did he rescue them, but they kept rebelling and scheming and were brought low by their own guilt.
44Still God had regard for their affliction when he heard their wailing.
45For their sake he remembered his covenant and relented in his abundant mercy.
46Winning for them compassion from all who held them captive.

C
47Save us, LORD, our God; gather us from among the nations That we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in praising you.
48Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Let all the people say, Amen! Hallelujah!

1 Peter 3: 13-18 Christian Suffering.

13Now who is going to harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is good?
14But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, blessed are you. Do not be afraid or terrified with fear of them,
15but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,
16but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.
17For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.
18For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit.
I. PATIENCE

Are you really a patient person? Father Nicolás’ teaching on patience might surprise you.

By Father Nicolás Schwizer | Source: Catholic.net

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The Bible further reveals the patience God has for us. God surely has patience with his children. He tolerates our defects and allows humanity to continue populating the earth in spite of our overall poor conduct.

It is the Divine Spirit who is patient with us and who now comes to us. From the Holy Spirit we must learn to have with others the same patience God has with us. The book of Proverbs teaches us: “It is better to be patient than powerful. It is better to win control over yourself than over whole cities” ([Proverbs 16: 32](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proverbs_16)). In his letters, Saint Paul insists again and again on the fundamental virtues of self-restraint and tolerance. He invites us to cover ourselves with patience, to bear with one another out of love, to mutually forgive each other ([Colossians 3: 12](https://eusebia.org/bible[colos3h]); [Ephesians 4: 2; 1 Thessalonians 5: 14; 1 Corinthians 13: 4](https://eusebia.org/bible[1cor13])).

**Patience with Loved Ones**

We all have had the following experience: The closer we are to a person, friction, annoyance and attitudes which are irritating increase. Let us consider our spouses, our children, our relatives who live with us, our coworkers, and our friends. The sincere relationship and the basic affection towards the other person are maintained, but permanent esteem is tarnished with daily disgust.

A great deal can be done to lessen friction and improve living together: dialog, opening up, being truthful, correcting one another and accepting one another. A great deal can be done, but it all has to be based on the fundamental essence of patience, tolerance, and pure and simple humanly bearing with one another because in the final analysis, we know that the situation will never be ideal for ourselves or for others.

What we have to do, therefore, is to overcome the inevitable setbacks with anticipated resignation.

Things take time. Fruits ripen slowly. Nature takes its course and the seasons cannot be hurried. The same thing happens with the cultivation of the Spirit. Time is needed. Patience is needed, until the Holy Spirit gradually converts us, a little bit at a time, into masters of patience.

**Patience on Listening**

All those who surround us are, each and everyone of them, like an angel from God who brings us his message. How do I maintain my attitude for listening to the word of God which comes to me by means of another person? First of all, through love, he or she is a word of God for me, but also through his/her wishes, needs and troubles.

Everything is a word of God which is calling me: the other person’s gestures of love call me to give thanks, others’ wishes and necessities call me to service, their troubles call me to help wish solutions and to share.

Do I listen to those words of God which come to me through others? God wants to tell me something! When I feel there is something from God in what someone tells me, do I embrace the message, do I open my heart so that the word can find a dwelling place in me?

We are to listen to others, but we also need to speak to others. There are moments in which God wants to speak to someone through us. To speak is then a Christian duty. To dialog is a Christian duty. Then I am a word for someone else which the person needs to listen to in order to grow. If I do not speak to others, then I am refusing to be a word of God.....Good News.....the Gospel of God for them.
Questions for Meditation
1. Do I think of myself as a patient person? In this aspect, how do others see me?
2. Do I have moments of prayer to listen to what God is telling me through happenings or persons?
3. Do I listen joyfully when others speak?

II. PATIENCE

In the Second Letter of Peter we are told that “the Lord does not delay His promise, as some regard ‘delay,’ but He is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Patience, therefore, has one purpose: holding off condemnation in the hope of repentance that leads to salvation.

If your prayer is truly effective, then, it should be teaching you to endure indifference, ingratitude, and contempt as Christ did: not with hot-headed frustration but with a calm refusal to hate.

Personal Meditation: How often do you want to “get rid” of problems and obstacles—be they things or people—rather than seek to understand and remedy the underlying cause of the difficulties? When you are feeling confused or helpless, how often do you become impatient with others, trying to cast the blame on them and control them, rather than turn to God in prayer for guidance and strength to face the unknown?

"Love is patient..." (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Patience is probably the most exercised fruit of the Spirit in our everyday lives. Or so it would seem. We all feel as if our patience is being tried almost non-stop. Whether it be with our family, friends, co-workers, strangers or whomever we come into contact with on a daily basis. The temptation not be become angry due to our patience being tried is something no one is exempt from. However, patience isn't what it seems. At least from a Catholic perspective.

At face value most people would probably define the fruit of patience as having the ability to bear or endure pain, difficulty or annoyance with calmness. Patience also has a variety of definitions depending on the circumstance. For example, one can exhibit patience while having to wait upon the results of a test of any sort. However, the patience I’m going to be focusing on in this blog will refer to the definition as given to us by the Catholic Church, which, when understood makes complete sense. It gives our being patient meaning and a usefulness. This is not to say that Websters own definition of patience is wrong, by no means, but as Christians patience takes a certain twist. It has to be viewed in the light of the gospel and with how the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, teaches it in truth.

Fr. John Hardon, S.J, speaking on behalf of the Church, defines the fruit of patience as,

"A form of the moral virtue of fortitude. It enables one to endure present evils without sadness or resentment in conformity to the will of God. (Pocket Catholic Dictionary, Fr. John Hardon, SJ, pg. 315)
Patience has three (3) grades or angles.

1) To bear difficulties without interior complaint. This grade is most similar with "Webster’s" definition of patience.
2) To use hardships to make progress in virtue.
3) To desire the cross and afflictions out of love for God and accept them with spiritual joy.

I will be focusing on the second and third grades or angles of the fruit of patience. This will enable us to more carefully define and recognize in ourselves where we stand as far as dealing with the patience we endure in our daily lives in order to bear the most fruit for Christ as possible.

But first let's look at the overall definition as shown above. Patience enables us to endure present evils without sadness or resentment in conformity to the will of God. As Catholics we have been given the gift of the Church, by Jesus, to show us the path to holiness. This narrow path has with it the truth in which God Himself has laid out before us to follow so we can live our lives in lasting satisfaction in unity with the Trinity. Since we are still currently working out our salvation here on earth with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) we must endure the present evils which this world, ruled by our common adversary the devil, throws our way. To live a life of authentic patience means to accept these evils for what they are and not giving the consent which is needed to rule or govern our progress towards the kingdom of God now established within us. We need to see them as being allowed by God Himself for our own sanctification and use them as such. Otherwise, giving consent to these evils, by way of giving way to impatience, means to allow our common enemy to reign within us. In essence, we say, "God, I cannot and will not accept what you have placed before me". On the contrary we must say, "God, although I cannot see that what is happening I trust that You do and that You have allowed this to happen for my greater good."

We use these hardships in life to make progress in virtue. With the virtue we gain we lead more and more souls to Christ. It's all in how you look at a situation that makes the difference as to how you're going to handle it. We can selfishly lose our patience because things simply aren't going how we, personally, feel they should. Out of the deadly sin of pride we might handle different circumstances differently only to our own harm because it's out of a purely selfish motive. It ignores God's goodness and love for us and replaces it with contempt. It is then afterwards where we suffer the consequences and wonder why.

The most difficult aspect of patience is patience at its perfection. Many of the saints have exhibited, to my knowledge, the perfection of patience. What is perfect patience? Perfect patience is having the ability to desire hardships, to desire suffering, to desire the cross because in them you find the greatest spiritual solace and joy. There have been many saints in whom I've read pray for these difficulties because they understand that it draws them closer to God and when drawn closer to God the more complete (for lack of a better word) we become in ourselves and our identity as to being fully human.

By no means am I perfect in patience! I struggle with it just about everyday. What I have learned about being patient is to simply take every situation that arises that is an occasion to be impatient captive and raise it to the cross of Christ. What does that mean? I will literally view this trial as God himself personally handing it to me and saying, "Alright, Paul, this might sting a little but I have given you power over it. Therefore, take this cross with my Son and see what I'll do through it. You won't be disappointed!" Like I said earlier it's all in how we look at it. Do not see an occasion to impatience as a roadblock or as a punishment. See it as a gift! Knowing this is what God our Father sees as being the perfect tool in shaping you to the very image of His Son and to strengthen your character. Yes, it is difficult and chances are we will fail! But rejoice and be glad! Our Father is patient with us! Rise up and try again!
III. Patience.

That mysterious, elusive word.

Just when I think I've got a little, *real life* comes crashing through.

It normally goes something like this...

1. My son decides that it would be a good idea to chase his sister.
2. My daughter decides that the best way to deal with the brotherly pursuit is to scream at the top of her lungs.
3. Right before all this...*daddy* decided it was a good time to make an important business call.
4. **Patience** has officially left the building!

I wish I could tell you that this is a rare occurrence but it isn’t. In fact, with both my wife and I working from home it actually happens more frequently than I’d like to admit.

**HOWEVER – We are working on it...consciously.**

I *know* that I must set a good example for my children. I *know* I need to practice patience. I *know* that patience is a *fruit* of the Spirit, a ‘perfection that the Holy Spirit forms in [me] as a first fruit of eternal glory’ (CCC 1832). I *know* that patience is an attribute of *charity* (1 Cor 13:4).

Yet all this knowledge seems to avail me little in the heat of the moment. Why is that? Aristotle is quoted as having said:

Patience is bitter, but it’s fruit is sweet.

Maybe that explains why it can be so hard. Bitterness, it’s a hard pill to swallow.

I want things to go the way *I think* they should go.

I want others to behave the way *I think* they should behave.

*I think* “out of control” situations and “perceived” misbehavior demands a response.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen insists that it does, but under certain conditions.

Patience is power. Patience is not an absence of action; rather it is “timing”. Patience waits on the right time to act, for the right principles and in the right way.

I guess it comes back to what *Mom* repeatedly told me as a kid – *Two wrongs don’t make a right.*

It’s okay for me to take a minute before responding to any situation or person. I have to check my motives, my disposition.

*Is it the right time to respond?*

*Is the motivation for my response based on the right principle(s)?*

*By responding now, am I acting in the right way?*
This criterion works...whether I’m stuck behind a truck going 20 miles an hour or my kids are going berserk.

The *rightness* of my timing, my reasons, and my action really does matter. St. Paul admonishing the Romans said:

For [God] will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life... – *Rom 2:6-7*

It is for this reason that I must be in **business of trying**. *Everything* is at stake.

**IV. PATIENCE**

21st century American culture promotes instant gratification: If you want it, you need it NOW! To live as a person filled with the Spirit, is to be counter-cultural. If your focus is on God, nothing else will be as important and so, you will be able to nurture the fruit of PATIENCE.

So often I hear people say that they just need more patience. "I need more patience...when dealing with my children; when dealing with my co-workers; when dealing with my spouse..." Patience seems to be a sought-after virtue.

I have to admit that I'm having a bit of a difficult time coming up with ideas for practicing and cultivating patience. Here are a couple, but if you have others, please share them by offering a comment.

- **Practice the art of waiting.** Be deliberately counter-cultural. As you're shopping, when you find something in the store, don't give in to the culture's "got-to-have-it-now" mentality. Gaze at it for a few moments, then walk away. When you get home and over the next couple of days, pray to God for insight as to whether you should really have that item. If you find that you aren't thinking about the item, you're probably able to live without it so you really don't need it. (This will also help keep your finances and clutter under control!)

- **Take a step back.** The practice of counting to 10 really does work. If you feel yourself getting frustrated with your children, spouse, co-workers, or friends, close your eyes, take a deep breath and count to 10 or even better, pray a short prayer (Glory Be, Hail Mary, Jesus help me...)

Dear God, please help me to *faithfully* practice patience.