I wish to relate Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Good Friday and Easter Sunday are not too separated, unrelated events. These two celebrations form a continuum in the process of salvation.

A few days ago on Good Friday, many of us prayed in church with great somberness, sadness and quiet introspection. The hymns we sang created an atmosphere that may be described as reflective and repentant. The reading from the prophet Isaiah provided the prophet’s vision of what the Savior would have to endure. The gospel described Jesus’ Passion which included the maneuverings between the Jews and the Romans as to how to rid themselves of the troublesome Jesus, and the betrayal and denials demonstrated by the apostles. Good Friday celebrated that Jesus, the God-made-man, bearing our sins like an innocent lamb, suffered the extreme penalty of crucifixion in order to save us from our sins. The Church calls this day “Good Friday” because on that day, Jesus redeemed all humanity. At church, as we listened, venerated and kissed the cross, who among us could not be moved by the price Jesus paid to save us?

By contrast, a few days later, on Easter Sunday, we rejoice! We sing “Glory to God” and “Alleluia”, which we have not said or sung since Lent began. Our hymns proclaim, “Jesus has risen.” Ringing of bells soon will ring out that a great event has taken place. Flowers create an environment of beauty in the sanctuary. The reading from the Acts of the Apostles declares that the risen Lord appeared visibly to various people, actually on a dozen occasions. The gospel reports Mary Magdalene’s initial discovery and Peter and John’s subsequent discovery of the empty tomb, and “that they did not yet understand that ... he had to rise from the dead.” Today, we thank God for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus! Resurrection is unique to Christianity. Jesus, who had demonstrated by various miracles that he had the power to raise other people from the dead, now himself has risen from the dead! Who can believe this? We believe it. We believe, as St. Paul writes, that “if we have lived with Christ, and died with Christ, that we shall rise with Christ. Death has no more power over us. Jesus has conquered sin and death.” (Rom. 8.6)

And so, sorrow has turned into joy. Grief has given way to gladness. Tears have been wiped away, and smiles radiate from our faces and our hearts. What some people have perceived as Jesus’ life ending in failure, we perceive and believe as having ending in victory, ... victory over sin and death.

This is our Christian faith. Easter is the most important feast of the Christian calendar. The birth of Jesus at Christmas was foundational. The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is inspirational. But Easter has demonstrated resurrected life. Because of Easter we believe in life after life, we believe in eternal life. Resurrection is unique to Christianity.
Good Friday and Easter Sunday are not two separated, unrelated events. Life still presents inevitable sufferings, and death continues to give way to eternal joy in eternal life. Each of us still suffers from time to time. The suffering may be physical afflictions to our bodies, emotional sufferings because of difficult relationships, spiritual because of sin and its effects, mental anguish because of natural limitations and the mysterious ways of the mind, financial because for most people there is not enough money to do all the things that they would like to do.

May I suggest a way to deal with suffering that relates Good Friday and Easter Sunday? When you inevitably suffer, 1) face it; don’t deny it; 2) feel it; our sufferings hurt; they pain us; they frustrate us; they probably occasion some anger within us; 3) unite your suffering with Jesus’ suffering. He died for us, he suffered for us. All of our suffering is embraced within Jesus’ suffering. 4) transcend your suffering by reaching out to others who also suffer. In the midst of your inevitable suffering, offer your suffering in prayer. Allow your suffering to help you grow in understanding and compassion for others. Turn your suffering into joy. It is salvific.

Good Friday and Easter Sunday are not two separated, unrelated events. Rather they are two moments in the continuum of salvation. Theologically, we are saved by Jesus’ suffering, death, resurrection and ascension. At Good Friday and Easter, our sufferings are incorporated into Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Yes, like Jesus, we suffer. Like Jesus, our sufferings shall be transitory and our joy, everlasting. Like Jesus, we shall rise to eternal life.

On this and every Easter Sunday, we leave the church and live our days, rejoicing. As today’s Responsorial Psalm exhorts us, “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad.” (Ps. 118)