

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

Everyone suffers. And I think we all ask: "why?"

Much of the suffering in the world is the result of man's inhumanity to man. God gives each person a free will so that we can freely choose to love Him and others. Without free will, there can be no love. However, some people use their free will to do evil and this brings suffering to others.

Some suffering is due to the fact that we live in a fallen world in which we experience decline, disease and death.

The Lord promises that all of our suffering will come to an end in the new creation He has initiated through the death and resurrection of His Son. In the meantime, we must each carry our own cross. There is some sound advice on how to go about this in the following essay originally posted on the *Catholic Exchange* website.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley

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Four Things to Remember When You're Suffering

By Jeannie Ewing

Shortly before Lent began, we heard a reading from the Book of Job. It was a woeful lamentation, of course, as is the entire book. But what struck me is that the priest mentioned during his homily, "We won't hear from Job again until June 2021, so this reading is well worth reflecting upon." Three and a half more years until we revisit Job? It seemed a bit shocking. Then as I thought more upon how dismal it seemed Job's life became after every possibly misfortune fell upon his life, it was evident to me that his story is one that we should pay attention to.

The Book of Job speaks of suffering based on God's permissive will, and Job is confronted with the same questions we are in this modern age: "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?" "Where is God if He really loves us?" "Is suffering a punishment for sin?" "We should turn our backs on God and blame Him for all the horrific things happening in the world today." Job's friends tempted him with similar sentiments, but he responded with complete trust.

What, then, can we learn from or about suffering that can help us when we're in the midst of our own painful situations? If Job could be afflicted with boils all over his body, have his entire family killed, lose all of his livestock and land – and still praise God – then we, too, can learn much from what we're permitted to suffer.

When we're in the thick of struggle, we seldom know where to begin to pull ourselves out of the self-pity or discouragement that accompanies us. Though not a comprehensive list by any means, here are four points to ponder when you are really grieving, in pain, or despondent.

Bless God at All Times

Probably the most famous of all that happened or was said in the Book of Job was when he said, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21). What can we learn from this when we are in the thick of suffering? Remember that Job proclaimed this with confidence *before* God restored his fortune and gave him an entirely new life and family. Job was thanking and praising God for *who He is*, not for what He does or does not do.

So must we. Suffering refines and prunes us, though we often find the process disdainful. What if, in the throes of uncertainty and in the middle of a trying time, we do as Job did: thank God. Praise Him.

Gratitude has an amazing way of transforming and healing us when we are spiritually, emotionally, or physically sick. A comparable prayer to the one Job prayed might be, "Lord, thank you for all that you have done, are doing, and will do in my life." Recount the blessings and ways God has answered your prayers in the past. Then you will be more inclined to accept the not knowing, the lingering questions, the painful waiting.

This, Too, Shall Pass

A common cliché attributed to ancient Persian Sufi poets, "This, too, shall pass" means more than what it seems at face value. All of life involves a sequence or series of transient moments, but when we are suffering, it feels as if moments are days. Life lingers somewhere in the in-between. Time is painfully slow, and we get stuck in thoughts and feelings revolving around the *what if's* or *if only's*.

If we look again at Job's life, we learn that suffering does, indeed, pass – just as all of life does. Trials do not continue interminably. Like everything else we experience on earth, they have a beginning – and an end.

Perhaps it's a good reminder to tell yourself "this, too, shall pass" when it feels like you have been wrestling a great deal with something, keeping in mind that the Cross always – always – leads to Resurrection, whether in this life or the next. As in Job's case, he was rewarded in this life. There's no guarantee of the same for us here and now. But we do know that the reward of our fidelity to God has been promised and sealed. Keep moving through today, remembering that God will bring you out of the darkness.

"Let Nothing Disturb You,"

Let nothing disturb you, is a favorite quote from St. Teresa of Avila. But these four simple words hardly seem simple to put into practice when we are seriously struggling. What makes her advice so powerful is that St. Teresa understood firsthand how difficult it is to become restless when God permits some tribulation to occur. It was when St. Teresa learned to relinquish her mysterious maladies and painful persecutions from the other sisters in her convent that her interior disposition began to change.

What does it mean to "let nothing disturb you" when you are suffering? Quite simply, it means to surrender to your struggle. Instead of fighting your cross or pushing against whatever it is that you would rather avoid going through, submit to the suffering. Relinquish your battle by letting go of your expectations of the way life "should" or "shouldn't" be. Instead, acknowledge and accept that there is no victory without the Cross for a Christian. And when you reach that point, whatever befalls you will not stir the beast of rage or anxiety in you. Instead, divine peace will settle in you, abide in you, and you will learn to resign yourself to the truth that God uses all things – beautiful and broken – for your good.

"All Is Well and All Manner of Things Shall Be Well."

Another famous line comes from St. Julian of Norwich. At first glance, it seems trite to say that "all is well" and "all manner of things shall be well," because all is not well when we are hurting. Everything seems off kilter.

But it's important to ponder her words and their meaning for us in the midst of suffering. Being in the middle is always the worst, because we have to experience all of the pain and uncertainty of "not yet arriving." What St. Julian means is that where you are right now – this moment – is exactly where God wants you to be. It is necessary for your spiritual well-being. It's a piece of your life's journey that, put together with everything else you will experience, creates the beautiful image of who you are and who you're meant to become. "All is well" means that your suffering has merit. Though it hurts immensely, it is not in vain. You don't have to waste your suffering by becoming bitter or angry or fighting against it. "All manner of things shall be well" means that God will use your misery, if you hand it to Him with a spirit of humility and contrition. He will transform all of your suffering into love, His love.

OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD SERIES CONCLUDES THIS THURSDAY, MARCH 22ND. We will gather in the hall from 6:30 to 8:30 and dinner is included.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETS THIS MONDAY AT 7PM IN THE HALL.

MARY'S HELPING HANDS

After all the Masses this weekend, Mary's Helping Hands will be selling their Spring Raffle tickets for a 25 diamond white gold cross pendant Necklace. Chances are \$1 each, or 6 for \$5.00.

CAMP ST. CHARLES – Boys and Girls Catholic Over-Night Summer Camp –

**3 OPEN HOUSES – March 25, April 8 and May 6, 2018
11 AM TO 3 PM**

Attend our open house to learn more about Camp St. Charles. Join us for lunch, a tour, a ride on the giant swing and an opportunity to meet the staff of Camp St. Charles. For over 60 years, thousands of children have been making friends, learning to work together, and developing an appreciation for Creation while camping out, riding horses, working their way through a challenge course, trying archery, paddling on the river, making art projects and doing lots of other activities in beautiful Southern Maryland. Fully Accredited with the American Camp Association and certified by the State of Maryland, Camp St. Charles has been run by the Salvatorian Fathers and Brothers and Lay Salvatorians for over 60 years. New families may save on tuition by registering at our open house. For more information, directions, and to sign up for an open house, see our web site: www.campstcharles.org or call us at 301-934-8799 or email director@campstcharles.org.

KNOW OF PARISHIONERS WHO ARE

HOMEBOUND? Please contact Fr. Conley or Sister Theresa at the rectory so we can minister to their spiritual needs.

RELIGIOUS GOODS STORE NEEDS HELP

We need some help to work after the 12 PM Mass. Please call Ellen Walls at 301- 579-2557 or Fay Adriani at 301-645-3531.

COPIES OF SHARING IN THE JOY OF LOVE IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY BY CARDINAL WUERL

are available on the table in back of the church. Please help yourself.

DINNERFEST RESULTS & EASTER EGG HUNT

This year's Dinnerfest was a great success. We sold 461 adult dinners and 14 children meals. Our total profit was \$5683.14, an increase of over \$1100. A special thank you to all the volunteers that made this year's dinner so great!

The **ST. MARY'S ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT** will be on Sunday, April 1st at 11:00 am.

For more information or if you wish to donate prizes, please contact Ellen Bowles at 301-472-4247 or heresellen@hotmail.com

PILGRIMAGE TO MOTHER SETON SHRINE IN EMMITSBURG, SATURDAY, APRIL 28. We will leave

at 8am and be back by 7pm. Fr. Conley will be leading this pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton where we will offer Mass, have a tour, and eat lunch. While in Emmitsburg we will also visit the Lourdes Grotto. On the way back from Emmitsburg we will stop at the Springfield Manor Winery in Thurmont for a wine and cheese tasting. Thanks to the generosity of a benefactor and the Keller Bus Company, the cost of the trip is just \$35 per person and includes lunch and the winery visit. For more information and to register contact Lauren Balderson at 301-870-2220 ext 11 or smbassist@comcast.net. Payment is due at registration. **Checks should be made out to St. Mary's Church.**

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am *The Romer Family*, 10am *Carol Chagnon*,
12N: *Parishioners*, **MON:** 8am *Gladys Brown*, **TUES:** 8am
Joseph L. Plater, **WED:** 8am *Lucille Tolson*, **THURS:** 8am
Doris Gross, **FRI:** 9:30am *Mary Helen Tippet*, **SAT:** 9am
John F. Coates, 4pm *Hideko Washington*.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:

Mary Bowes, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Irma Johnson, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Maurice Long, Jim Middleton, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Ryan Myers, Lenora Proctor, Joseph Quade, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND,

\$10,292.00. The unidentified donations totaled \$751.00. We received \$104.00 for our School Support.