



Volume 4/Issue 8 - Easter 2019

The Family Apostolate

Where Faith and Family Meet

Finding
Holiness
In
Suffering

Losing
ADAM

My Story With
CANCER
As A Priest

DIVORCE
and
HOLINESS

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The Family Apostolate provides pastoral care, promotes the critical need for family prayer and regular reception of the sacraments, imparts catechesis, offers opportunities for family get-togethers, and builds bridges between individual families and the larger church community. Through offering diverse spiritual and psychological resources, the Family Apostolate seeks to bring the merciful presence of Christ to families in an increasingly difficult world.



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Join us every Thursday for an hour of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament – Scripture reflection, silent prayer, praise and worship music and Benediction. 7:00-8:00 p.m. For more information, contact Patti Rubin
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Home Blessings

Having your home blessed is a beautiful way to sanctify your dwelling place, often referred to as the domestic church. Home blessings involve a priest accompanied by a small prayer team who visit people at their homes. The priest blesses the house and the encounter is one that is both touching and deeply spiritual. Home blessings are primarily delivered in the month of October (Mary's month) or by special appointment.

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First Saturday Mass and Breakfast

Held every first Saturday morning of the month. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass honors our Blessed Mother, Queen of the Family Apostolate. Anniversaries, birthdays and special occasions are also recognized and blessed. Mass is followed by breakfast in the Holy Trinity hall. Begins with 8:30 am mass. For more information, contact Marlene Lauer -
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Christ the King Church

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Bishop Mark Brennan and the clergy during the 2018 Christ the King Feast



Kids of Christ the King at the Feast

Special Events/Prayer Requests

The FA sponsors special events throughout the year such as retreats, healing masses and group celebrations. Our prayer teams also pray for your special needs and requests. For more information, contact Patti Sadler -
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Youth group at the FA breakfast fellowship

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Editorial

A Positive Gaze In Suffering!

On April 30, 2018, Pope Francis spoke to the parents of Davide Boniotti, diagnosed with Allan-Herndon-Dudley syndrome when he said, "This positive gaze is a typical 'miracle' of love. It knows how to see the good even in a negative situation (and) it knows how to safeguard a small flame in the midst of a dark night."

The statement resonates with the stories we've covered in this Easter edition of the FA magazine, as if Pope Francis was speaking to the heart of our theme, *Finding holiness in suffering*. In our interview, we share the inspiring story of Fr. Carlos Osorio. Like any young man, Fr. Osorio loves life and desires a happy priestly life. At the same time, he's been battling cancer for about six years now. Fr. Osorio does not let his pains get the better part of him; he takes care of his flock with pastoral compassion.

Michael and Michele Nagle share their experience of losing their twenty-eight-year old son, Adam. The young Adam was full of life, barely entering adulthood when death struck unannounced. The Nagle's express their loss this way, "Loosing a child makes you grieve with a sadness you didn't know existed." Yet, they point us in the direction of faith and hope that speak eloquently of the "positive gaze," significant in challenging human situations.

The story of Alora is another example of the positive gaze that Christians are encouraged to exude. Through great difficulty, Alora's parents hint of their desire to be loving and compassionate. Alora was strong-willed, combined with difficult developmental and mental disabilities. Her parents demonstrate resilience and hold on to that "small flame" which radiates in the darkness. Alora's story is an inspiring testimony of strength and determination.

Our Easter edition reviews the glories inherent in suffering which comes at the least expected time, especially because of its undesirability. Couples struggling with divorce experience suffering. Parents faced with health challenges experience suffering. The young, battling the realities of loneliness experience suffering. Children standing by the bedside of their dying parents experience suffering. Families torn apart by conflicts experience suffering. To these effects, we have reviewed real life stories, proffered practical steps, and provided resources for support. We extol the joy of Easter to announce hope. We can find holiness in suffering.

At the core of suffering is the love of God and the warmth of friendship. During his crucifixion, Christ was abandoned by most of his trusted friends, yet, the presence of his mother and the beloved apostle was comforting. Hence, he cried out, "Mother, behold your son. Son, behold your mother." In this edition, we want our readers to understand that suffering isn't permanent even though it can be overwhelming. A positive gaze is the proper tonic.

As usual, our writers have covered sensitive topics: divorce and marriage, stress and therapy, anxiety and prayer, loneliness and friendship, grief and parenting. We have provided catechetical materials that help readers in the faith. We hope you'll enjoy reading it.

Happy Easter!



V Arisukwu

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,
Thank you for publishing a magazine about true Catholic teachings with articles that are personal and easily relatable. One article I particularly enjoyed reading in your last edition was, "The Empty Nest". As a new mother to two small children, it's hard to imagine my life without the craziness of being a young mom. I was able to put myself in the author's shoes and reflect on how it will feel when my babies will be grown and out of the house. The Family Apostolate magazine has also helped to strengthen my faith in understanding Church teachings on some controversial issues. I will continue to pray for you and your beautiful ministry.

Laura Miller

Dear Editor,
I wanted to express my gratitude and appreciation of the magazine that I have come to look forward to receiving. The articles are always easy to read and relatable for all walks and stages of life. I

particularly enjoyed reading "Sibling Rivalry" in the past issue. Having 4 kids, sibling rivalry is something we deal with in our house on a daily basis. The perspective from the article was helpful and eye opening! Thank you to The Family Apostolate for a beautiful Catholic magazine filled with relatable articles. Please continue all that it takes to create such a wonderful magazine. Your hard work is not going unnoticed.

Elise Moore

Dear Editor
The FA magazine provides us with another way to grow in our faith. From my perspective, the best part of the Family Apostolate Magazine is how it renders stories from families who have turned crosses into grace. In the 2018 Summer edition, the story of the family with the handicapped son is a good example of this because they consider him such a joy. The story made me appreciate the joy of parenting in a difficult situation. What some people

would consider a cross, this family considers a grace. What a wonderful example of following our faith.

Theresa Weir

Dear Editor
I find myself reading your articles numerous times, and always finding something I did not get the first time around. Somehow, you manage to give us a better understanding of some subjects we are too often reluctant to discuss or ask questions about. Thank you for your articles on reproductive technology. While most of us may feel that it is wrong, few of us really ever understand why. Your article, explained the concept, steps and the harm of these procedures. Ultimately, we can now see the WHY. Looking forward to the next issue of The Family Apostolate.....

Carmen Flynn

A Great Way to Encounter GOD

The Sacrament of Anointing

By: Fr. Michael DeAscanis

One of the most special calls that a priest can receive is this, "Father, come quickly. Our parent is dying and needs an anointing."

When Jesus came to earth, He taught us seven new ways of praying, which we call Sacraments. Each Sacrament helps us in a different way at different times in our lives. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick helps us when facing serious illness and suffering, or at the end of life. It helps us encounter God. Let us reflect on the power and beauty of this Sacrament.

There are two things a person should do to spiritually prepare for death. First, the individual should express sorrow for sins committed in life. Second, invite the Holy Spirit of God into their soul. This Sacrament helps do both.

Where is it in the Bible?

There are two explicit references to the Sacrament of Anointing in the New Testament. St. James, the apostle, speaks as follows: "Are there sick people among you? Let them send for the priests (presbyters) of the Church, and let the priests pray over them anointing them with oil in the name of

the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick persons, and the Lord will raise them up. If they have committed any sins, their sins will be forgiven them" (James 5:14-15). St. Mark, the evangelist, also speaks of this Sacrament: "So [the twelve] went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them" (Mark 6:12-13). We see in these two passages that the apostles used this Sacrament to assist the sick. Catholic priests today, the successors of the apostles, continue to do so.

Who should receive it?

The Catholic Catechism tells us, *it is not a Sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. As soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, it is a fitting time for him to receive this Sacrament. If a sick person who received this anointing recovers his health, he can in case of another grave illness, receive this Sacrament again. If during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious, the Sacrament may be repeated. It is fitting to receive the Anointing just prior to a serious operation. The same holds for the*

elderly whose frailty becomes more pronounced" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, pars. 1514-1515).

Why be anointed?

There are three main effects of this Sacrament. First, it sometimes causes a physical healing. Many times people have come to me after an anointing and said that their symptoms had gone away: cancers healed and chronic pains relieved. Sacraments bring the power of Jesus, and Jesus can perform miracles for those who believe in Him! Second, it always gives grace to the sick person to bear their illness well; to have hope and perseverance and

to resist temptations. All people suffer. The choice we have is whether to suffer alone or with God. The Sacraments bring God into our situation to encourage us and lighten the cross. Third, it gives forgiveness of sins. Ideally it should be preceded by the Sacrament of Confession, to forgive any mortal sins. But if the person is physically unable to confess, then the Sacrament itself confers forgiveness. Because it involves the forgiving of sins, anointings may be done only by a priest.

How does the priest do the anointing?

The priest first lays his hands on the

person's head in silence, invoking the Holy Spirit upon them, that their body and soul may be filled by the Holy Spirit of God. The God who created life can also heal life. Jesus, when he walked on earth, miraculously healed many who suffered from sickness.

Then the priest anoints the person with the Oil of the Sick on their forehead and on the palms of both hands. As he does so he says, "through this holy anointing, may the Lord in His mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from your sins, save you and raise you up" The oil used for the anointing comes from

the bishop himself who, at the Chrism Mass, blesses it at the Cathedral during the previous Holy Week.

Can the Sacrament be administered to the dead?

The priest can only give this Sacrament to those who are living. If a person dies before the priest arrives, the priest cannot give the Sacrament. The priest may bless the body with holy water.

What are the "Last Rites?"

When someone is facing imminent death, the Anointing should be combined with Viaticum and the Apostolic Pardon. These



three combined rites are referred to as the “Last Rites.”

Viaticum is a Latin word meaning, “on the way with you.” In receiving Holy Communion shortly before death, those who desire it and who are sincerely repentant of their sins, it not only forgives them, but also purifies their souls such that they need no further purgation. They are ready to go straight to heaven. What a gift from the pope! As Jesus told St. Peter, the first pope, “Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). When he administers this Apostolic Pardon the priest says, “by the authority which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a full pardon and the remission of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Pastoral Care of the Sick, par 243).

So, you see, the Sacrament of Anointing and its related rites do help us encounter God. They bring the Spirit of God into our soul at critical moments, especially as we face death and prepare to enter eternal life. God desires to go on the way with us!



Fr. Michael DeAscanis is a priest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, ordained in 2004. His seminary studies specialized in bioethics and medical ethics. He currently serves as pastor of St. Philip Neri and St. Clement parishes. He also serves as chaplain of the Catholic Medical Association in Baltimore, giving spiritual and ethical support to physicians and medical students. Fr. DeAscanis writes for the FA Magazine on Theology and the Sacraments

**PRAYER OF ANOINTING
FOR THE SICK:**

**THROUGH THIS HOLY
ANOINTING, MAY THE LORD
IN HIS MERCY HELP YOU
WITH THE GRACE OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT. MAY THE
LORD WHO FREES YOU
FROM YOUR SINS, SAVE YOU
AND RAISE YOU UP!**



Evangelizing Through Prayer

but what does that mean?

By Stephen Driver



This article may contain catechesis and philosophy. Kinda like peanuts in your candy. You have been warned. *Don't worry, dear reader, notwithstanding my above warning, I'll still try to work in some pop culture references too.*

Recently I was asked to speak to my parish congregation about the importance of prayer in my life. I suppose it's the equivalent of providing a testimonial about how prayer has changed me. So I spent some time thinking about the question: has prayer changed me? At the time, I wasn't sure that it had. It's not like I'm six years old anymore kneeling at my bedside praying every night. But If that works for you, go for it.

As Catholics we do a lot of stuff by rote memory according to ceremony and tradition. It's rehearsed on Sunday mornings or at school, with our parents, or the religious around us. It sometimes gets to the point that we don't really think about what we're doing or what effect these actions and prayers actually have on us. It's almost like being inside a forest and you can't see the scope of that forest because you're inside it.

It's a question of perspective.

It was at this point that my brain started to hurt and I stopped thinking about that for a bit. There was another question preoccupying me about this too. What was I going to tell a church full (on a good day) of people about the importance of praying that they hadn't already heard? The idea struck me like telling a professional chef about the importance of boiling water. I had visions of people checking their watches and making little twirling motions with their fingers to get me to move it along so they could get out of there at a reasonable time. And God help me if it was a long homily, there might be open revolt.

So, as I was thinking about this, I realized there were two main points I wanted to make. I figured if I could drive those home, maybe the two or three people paying attention to me might get something out of it. I'm only going to discuss one here though, for the sake of this article's length. The first point was trying to define what a prayer was and what purpose it served. The answer I arrived at was, it depends. Prayer is somewhat as enigmatic as God Himself.

God is love, perfect justice tempered by infinite mercy, a divine will that brings forth creation. There are a lot of definitions. Prayer can be viewed the same way. We can pray to give thanks to God. We can pray for healing. We can pray for a pony, or that your math teacher will be sick tomorrow and won't make you take the test. Sometimes we pray together as a family, or a community, or a nation, and on very rare occasions, as a world. Sometimes we pray silently, kneeling in tears, alone in the dark. I've done all at one time or another. Well, except for the pony. But I think that if we're doing it correctly, there is a commonality to all this and I think it actually relates back to God Himself.

I'm a huge fan of J.R.R. Tolkien. You may not know that he was an ardent Catholic. His Catholicism permeates all his works of fiction. In his book, *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien writes about the creation of the universe. Eru, Tolkien's analog of God in his fictional universe, *sings* creation into being and then creation joins back in singing with him to form a divine choir. Sound familiar?

This has a direct connection to Genesis, where God *speaks* existence into creation, “Then God *said*: Let there be light, and there was light.” Recall the echo of that in John 1: “In the beginning was the *Word*, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” [emphasis mine] What we’re seeing here is the power of God to speak (or think, it’s not like God has a mouth) things into being. The universe and everything in it is brought into being by God simply saying it. Jesus is the Word, the spoken will of God, given physical form. Though as a musician, I’m kind of partial to the idea of God singing those words.

So how does this connect to prayer? Well let me paraphrase St. Francis here when he said, “Preach every day. When necessary use words.” He might just have easily replaced “Preach” with “Pray.” They’re very similar. Prayer is our human attempt to use words, spoken aloud or thought, to bring about reality as we try to imitate God. In doing so, we can use prayer to bring about physical changes to the world around us simply by being the physical manifestation of whatever we’re praying about. Now of course we have limitations. We’re only human. Our prayer alone isn’t going to make cancer go away, though if God answers that prayer in His wisdom, it will

through Him.

Prayer is often looked at as an answer to suffering. While we may not always get the healing we pray for, that doesn’t make it any less useful in its own way. God gives us modern medicine and the physical and mental capacity to become doctors that enable healing in that way. But prayer—our ability to vocalize our desires to God—helps complete that picture. Even though the prayer itself may not wish away illness, it brings another dimension to the situation. What value can you place upon the comfort generated by prayer? Sometimes God has a different plan for us and our suffering here on Earth, is insignificant when held against the weight of eternity. So even if we, through prayer, ask for something that isn’t in our best interests, God is still there to guide us to the right ends. Can you trivialize the hope inherent in knowing that your God hears you, even if the answer is “no?”

Even in the example above, where the person stricken with a terrible disease prays for healing that doesn’t come and ultimately dies, does that minimize the importance of the prayer itself if the act of praying brings that person closer to God in the process? I think prayer still has value because of the comfort and peace that it

brings. And if we carry anything of ourselves into the next life, surely those qualities can come along for the ride.

Prayer, even in an abstract sense, can add very tangible benefits if those thoughts are put into action. There are very real ways we can pray and make changes around us. Volunteer for a good cause, donate something a little extra to your favorite organization, make an effort to get to church just a little bit more often. While you’re there, listen a little more closely; like Eru, sing a little louder, no one will laugh at you. And if you have a guest speaker who makes your Mass go ten minutes longer, don’t make little twirling motions with your fingers. He or she is probably nervous enough.

Everything we do, with love, is a prayer in action. Those actions, done where others can see them, show the world what we’re all about.



Stephen Driver is an editor in the Washington, D.C. area. He has been a part of Christ The King Parish in Glen Burnie since he was old enough to walk. He’s still working toward being a better Catholic. Stephen Driver writes for the FA Magazine on Evangelization and Prayer.



The FA Team wishes our numerous readers, sponsors, and families a happy and joyous Easter celebration. May the joy of the risen Christ be yours always. Amen.

Congratulations
Fr. Albert,
on your installation as
Pastor!

Dear Fr. Albert,
It is with joy that the Family Apostolate Inc. congratulates you on your installation as pastor for Blessed Sacrament Saint Charles Borromeo parish, Newark, NJ on Sunday, March 31. We are grateful to God for giving you this opportunity to be a pastor for his people. We pray for wisdom as you shepherd and lead God’s flock.

The FA Team!

DIVORCE & HOLINESS

By Dec. Kevin Brown

The nature of marriage

Jesus speaks to us in Matthew 19 about divorce, reminding us that a man and woman become one flesh in marriage, “therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Mt 19:6)

But divorce is a sad fact of human life, and all of us know someone who has been divorced, or affected by divorce, especially the children of divorced parents. Divorce is a heavy cross to bear. Suffering begins long before the breakup and can continue for an extensive time afterward. Anyone going through a divorce can feel betrayed and disappointed that their hopes and dreams have been dashed. There may be lingering bitterness, depression, and even a loss of faith (Where is God? Why did He let this happen?). In this essay, I will discuss some causes of divorce, whether divorce is really an option, and how it might be prevented. But if divorce has happened, how does the Church help those suffering its effects? Can we find a way of healing and holiness in our lives despite being divorced?

Before addressing the topics mentioned above, it must be said that marriage is forever, created by the consent of the couple before God, and that divorce is a matter of civil law only, not Church law. Therefore, the Church never recommends divorce, but may examine the marriage situation to declare a marriage null due to an impediment negating its underlying validity.

Most Catholics are aware that there is a real attack on marriage in our time. Our

culture and mainstream media are generally intolerant of voices who defend traditional marriage, speak out on the negative effects of divorce, its impending damage to children, and its contribution to the breakdown of our society. Divorce is widely accepted as a norm if either half of the couple is unhappy for any reason. Yet marriage is still undertaken by most people, although we know there are segments of our society that see it as unnecessary.

There are many secular definitions of what marriage should be. A humorous definition says: “Marriage is the opportunity to annoy one special person for the rest of your life.” I have known couples who seemed to be constantly bickering yet were still together after many years.

But the true Christian definition of marriage identifies it as a covenant between the couple and God. Pope Francis says: “Christian marriage is that sacrament which builds up the community of the Church and of society. Marriage has been inscribed in creation's design by God, and, by his grace, countless Christian men and women have lived married life fully.” In another speech the Pope said: “Marriage is the most beautiful thing that God has created.”[1] A married couple reflects God's love and His image because they become one flesh. But this “image of God is soiled” through divorce, which often harms everyone involved and can affect children more than anyone else. Christian marriage is intended to be lifelong and permanent (“until death parts us”), sexually exclusive, and ordered to the procreation and raising of children. We are called to fall in love, to

seek to go beyond ourselves, in marriage and in raising children.

Let's consider the causes of divorce and whether it is an “option” in marriage. David Willis points out: “Marriage is not 50-50. Divorce is 50-50. Marriage has to be 100-100. It isn't dividing everything in half but giving everything you've got.” How do couples fail in giving each other 100 percent?

What are the causes of divorce? Is divorce ever necessary?

The marriage covenant is created by an act of the will of the man and woman, publicly expressed in the marriage ceremony. If the couple enters into marriage with the thought that they can always get divorced if things “don't work out,” then they violate the very nature of their sacred vows. The same is true if the couple refuses to bring children into their marriage or considers it acceptable to be unfaithful to their spouse.

Social attitudes can prevent us from seeing the beauty of marriage: Career success, increased disposable income, home ownership, multiple sexual partners, weight loss, fame, and self-esteem are often presented as more worthwhile goals than marriage and children. We may also have divorce present in our family, and/or lack the example of a lifelong committed marriage by our parents or grandparents.

I am fortunate that my parents stayed together for 52 years until my father passed away. But please don't think that I am from an ideal family—there were times in my parent's marriage when separation or



divorce was a possibility. Often the contentious issue was my father's abuse of alcohol. Fortunately, in his last few years he overcame this problem. Somehow their example of lifelong marriage despite difficulties has carried over to their children—my brothers and I have had no divorces. Thanks be to God!

I just mentioned one cause of the possible breakup of marriage—addictions, including alcohol, drugs, and pornography. If this situation is present at the time of the engagement, it indicates that the marriage should either be postponed until treatment is successful, or not be undertaken at all.

One of my ministries as a deacon is to assist the marriage tribunal of the Archdiocese of Baltimore as an advocate for persons seeking a declaration of nullity (more about annulments later!). As a result, I am familiar with different causes of divorce, the suffering that leads to divorce, and the suffering caused by divorce.

The Church never encourages divorce, but situations may arise that are unresolvable or dangerous. We always need God's help and mercy, but many couples today do not have God and prayer in their home life, and so the couple's issues become difficult. I also see a lack of asking for help in the marriage—couples often fail to ask the Church for help, especially if they are not regular church-goers, and they may fail to seek secular counseling.

The next section of this essay will address some of the ways the Church can help couples. Here are some situations that may contribute to a decision to divorce, based on my own observations:

Lack of proper marriage preparation: the couple wants a wedding day but haven't properly prepared for the next 50 or more years of marriage. The bride in particular, may think of the wedding ceremony and reception as the biggest day of her life but not consider the many years ahead.

Social or family pressure to marry: an unexpected pregnancy may lead to a hastily considered marriage but the foundation for a lasting marriage may not be present in this relationship.

Family conflicts: tension or conflict between the respective families, expectations that the couple will choose one family over the other. Early in their marriage, my parents were torn between the demands of their respective families. They decided to move to another state to get away from this situation—a drastic solution but successful. Many couples need to resolve how they will handle this situation, while trying to keep the peace with all.

Conflicts over money and possessions: He wants a sports car, she wants a new kitchen—and they can never agree or responsibly compromise. Perhaps the principal bread winner wants to control all the expenditures—this situation calls for counseling, either formal or informal. When money and possessions become the

central focus of a marriage, then the couple stand the chance of losing sight of God and their covenant with Him.

Domestic violence: one spouse may be abusive (emotionally or physically), controlling, or deceptive. Unless counseling is successful, no marriage should be attempted with this person. Domestic emotional abuse can evolve into physical harm, and even death threats. A separation is needed in such cases to avoid harm to the abused spouse and/or children. There have been cases where one spouse endures abuse for years, hoping the other will change. This is a heavy cross to bear, and few people are capable of it.

Infidelity: Jesus admits this in Mt 19, although he doesn't encourage divorce.

What is the issue in many cases? Selfishness! A couple who were close at the start of married life may end up leading separate lives in the same house. There are often failures to communicate and understand the other.

Can divorce be prevented? How can the Church help strengthen marriages or help marriages in trouble?

Let's consider preventive measures and ways to rescue a failing marriage.

Pope Francis, speaking at a meeting on his apostolic journey to the country of Georgia, gave ways to help couples in the Church, through “offering welcome, closeness, accompaniment, discernment, and integration into the Body of the Church.” It is of great importance that those in the Church work to save marriages. For couples, he gave three “words of gold in married life,” to aid in building up a marriage: “can I?” (in regard to asking their spouse's opinion), “thank you,” and “forgive me.” He encouraged married couples to quickly make peace with each other when arguments arise, and to remember his three words, which are crucial for marital growth.[1]

On the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, the Pope's homily included this advice to parents: "Excuse me, but I give you this



Deacon Kevin Brown was ordained for the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 2005, and has served in Glen Burnie since then. He resides in Severna Park with his wife Monica (and their cat Sasha). They will celebrate their 40th anniversary this year. Deacon Kevin has an M.A. in Church ministry from the Ecumenical Institute at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Roland Park.

advice: Never fight in front of your children. Never. It is normal for spouses to fight; it is normal. The opposite would be strange. Do it, but without them hearing it, so that they do not see it." The pope, speaking in Italian, said. "You do not know the anguish a child experiences when he or she sees his or her parents fight." [2] Ruth Bell Graham, wife of the evangelist Billy Graham, once said: “A good marriage is the union of two good forgivers.”

Our challenge is to help people overcome the tensions and struggles of married life by accompanying them on their journey of holiness, which is what God intended for marriage. We want our couples to understand that marriage is a vocation, to be worked at with forgiveness and kindness, and is the means of their own spiritual growth.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore offers the following programs to strengthen and heal marriages: (1) The Retrouvaille program for couples facing difficult challenges in their relationship—to help them heal, forgive and renew their marriage, (2) the Worldwide Marriage Encounter program that helps good marriages become better, and (3) the CHERISH program consisting of parish retreats for married couples, (4) the

Prepare and Enrich program which offers psychological and some spiritual resources to engaged couples and couples. There are also various parish based programs throughout the Archdiocese.[3]

After a divorce— how can we help the divorced?

There is pastoral help for the divorced and children affected by divorce. For example, the Single Again program helps divorced, widowed, or separated adults. Faith Journeys offers a Catholic-based model of accompaniment and mentoring for children experiencing parental divorce, separation or remarriage. [3] Those who are divorced may also wish to remarry at some future time. These persons can seek the help of the marriage tribunal to see if a decree of nullity (an annulment) can be granted.

“There is a misconception that an annulment is simply a Catholic divorce; nothing could be further from the truth. Divorce is a civil law procedure in which one or both persons decide to end an existing marital contract. An annulment is different. The Catholic Church teaches that once a sacramental marriage is constituted by the valid, mutual consent of the couple, only death can break the marriage covenant.

Marriage is forever. An annulment is an official judgment on the part of the Church that (1) there was an impediment that prohibited a valid marriage, or (2) a defect of the consent of one or both parties rendered the marriage consent invalid.” [3]

The fact of a divorce does *not* exclude the divorced person from the sacraments. Only if there has been a remarriage without ecclesial permission is someone excluded from Holy Communion. Anyone needing assistance with an annulment, or who has questions about the process, can approach a priest or deacon, or call the tribunal directly. There are also periodic informational talks given by the marriage tribunal throughout the Archdiocese and all are welcome to come and ask questions. The process of getting an annulment can be a journey of mercy, forgiveness and healing for the parties to the marriage that has broken apart. Therefore, no one need be afraid to enter the process.

Can we find holiness despite divorce?

Finally, can we find a path to holiness through the wreckage of marriage and family that is created by divorce? The bitterness, anger, disappointment, feelings of betrayal, desire for revenge, feelings of abandonment by God, etc. due to a divorce do have a path of healing. Rather than condemning others and even ourselves, we can learn to forgive. Only forgiveness will heal the wounds of the heart and allow us to live like Christ— we must forgive those who have disturbed our souls and our peace. But is this really possible?

Jesus teaches us to forgive each other, else our heavenly Father cannot forgive us (see Mt 6:12, 14-15). Pope Francis reminds us: “it is precisely in receiving forgiveness from God that we in turn are capable of forgiving others. This is why Jesus has us repeat these words each time we recite the Our Father prayer, that is, every day. And it is crucial that, in a sometimes pitiless

society, there be places, such as the family, in which to learn to forgive one another.” [4] Someone may protest that they do not feel like forgiving their offender—but really, forgiveness is an act of the will, and if we decide that we want to follow Christ by forgiving, our emotions will follow along eventually.

The Pope reminds us, “the capacity to forgive and to seek forgiveness is part of the vocation and mission of the family,” [4], and therefore forgiveness is part of our personal vocation. It may take prayer and time to be able to forgive, but it is essential if we want to follow God's will and be the disciples of Christ that we are meant to be.

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LOVE, Reality-Style

By Christine Doty

My favorite moment at a wedding is when the groom sees his bride for the first time as she begins her walk down the aisle. While most eyes are on the bride as she enters the room, I am watching the groom. Invariably, he is overwhelmed by how beautiful she is and by the love and joy he feels in that moment. Such captures the promise and hopeful expectation of most couples as they begin married life together. More than 2 million people in the United States embark on this journey each year.¹ The honeymoon begins as the couple excitedly start life together.

Then reality sets in. A period of adjustment follows as each partner comes to terms with the fact that they have married a flawed human being. Along with the stressors of daily life, power struggles begin to emerge and conflict replaces passion. Each person's expectations about money, sex and romance, in-laws, kids, household chores, work, and religion may have become a source of disappointment and pain. This pattern is so predictable that we have given it a name – “the seven-year itch”. This pattern in long-term relationships is experienced by most couples to varying degrees. Some may only experience minor annoyance and aggravation and will weather the changes well. These couples do a few things successfully when facing hurt in the relationship or conflict.



Photo by JOSEPH ANDREW from Pexels

- They talk about it. They do not withdraw, or walk on eggshells around each other. They address the issue.
- They allow their partner to be imperfect because they are imperfect, too.
- They forgive. They do not dwell too much on the hurt or hold a grudge.

However, even the most resilient couple can run into trouble. Despite the best efforts, there may be some situations in which talking it out and extending grace to your partner are simply not enough to work through issues.

When To Get Help

If the state of your marriage leads to you or your partner feeling depressed, disregarded, or insecure, seeking the help of a therapist can help you get back on track. An extramarital affair is one of the most difficult situations for a couple to work through. Salvaging a marriage in the aftermath of an affair often requires assistance. Are you just co-existing and feel more like roommates? A therapist may help you reconnect. If you are staying together for the sake of the children, an objective third party may be able to help you move forward. When you cannot resolve your differences and are at an impasse, a therapist may help you find common ground or make peace with your differences. When separation seems like the only choice, seek help. There may be another way. “Research indicates that 60-70% of couples make some improvements in their relationships with even a relatively short stint in therapy.”²

What to Expect from Therapy

It is important to do your research before choosing a therapist. Look for someone who has training and experience in helping married couples and who is biased toward helping you find solutions rather than helping you leave the marriage when things get really hard. You should feel comfortable and respected by your

therapist. A good sign is that the therapist can accept feedback from you. If you get started with a therapist and it doesn't feel like a good fit, trust your instincts and try someone else.

Your therapist will start by asking you a simple question along the lines of, “Why are you here?” It is good to think about the reasons for seeking out marriage counseling ahead of time. The therapist may want to see each partner individually for part of an appointment or a whole session once or twice and then resume joint sessions. How long you attend therapy depends on the nature of the problem and how quickly you are able to resolve it.

Expect to work hard at being open and honest with each other. Your therapist is there to guide you where needed, but the work is up to you. You can expect support, encouragement, and wise leadership in this process.

What Not To Expect from Therapy

Your therapist will not tell you how to solve your problems, but will guide and support you as you find solutions. Your therapist will not tell you if you should stay together or separate. Ideally, the therapist is teaching you how to deal with your problems on your own.

The Rest of the Story

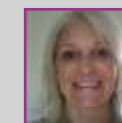
Thankfully, there is more to marriage than a honeymoon phase that fades into dissatisfaction. Marriage is hard work but the reward of that hard work is worth it. As couples enter mid-life, children leave the nest and responsibilities for aging parents increase. Hopefully, you've learned to work together as a couple and have grown together. Research shows that couples who last for decades have an attitude that marriage is permanent and do not view divorce as an option. They work hard to learn how to talk and listen. They strive to be generous and kind to each other. In the last few decades, the relationship comes full circle. You've made it through difficult times

and are thriving. The relationship is deeper than at the start of your marriage and you fall in love with each other again. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 (NLT) gives us the recipe:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance.

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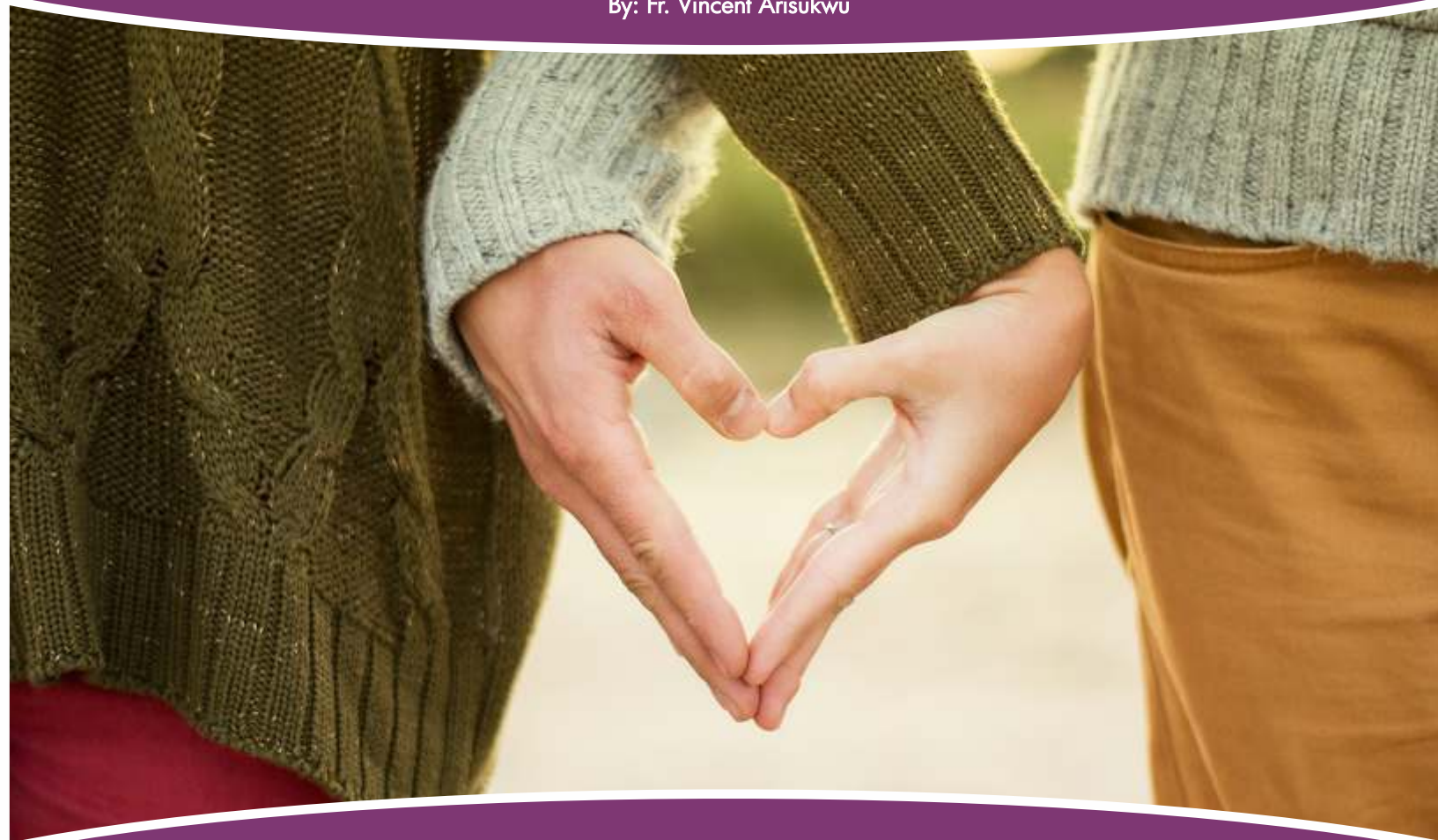


Christine Greiner Doty works as an outpatient therapist to children, adolescents, and adults. She has also worked as a child advocate in the court systems, with women in need of housing and with victims of domestic violence.

Couples Corner

When love is not loving

By: Fr. Vincent Arisukwu



This begins our series of articles about the challenges that couples face once they say, “I do.” In this issue, we will address spousal abuse and suffering. Even if the topic discussed here does not apply specifically to your family, it is an opportunity to learn more about the struggles that those in our larger Christian and particularly Catholic family experience.

Different marriages experience different challenges. Couples assume roles in marriage primarily based on their personality. There are overfunctioners and

underfunctioners in every marriage relationship. Overfunctioners take up dominant roles, while underfunctioners assume submissive roles. Neither of these roles is bad or good. Overfunctioners may exhibit competence in fixing big things around the house. Underfunctioners might take the role of straightening the little details. Hence, there is a balance. Maladaptive or dysfunctional behavior is the problem. Overfunctioning or underfunctioning can become a behavioral problem if it leads to abuse in the relationship.

Abusive marriages are detrimental and can take different forms. Counselors consider the term domestic violence and abuse to include numerous behaviors which can range from ongoing “negative behavior” or one-time events all the way to continual harmful, controlling, destructive, and violent abuse.

Abuse can be physical, psychological/emotional, or verbal. Physical abuse means physical violence or brutality. Psychological abuse results from the actions or inactions of one’s partner, such as withdrawal or nonactive

involvement intended to punish the other; it can also arise from sexual violence against a partner. Verbal abuse is the use of harsh or unfriendly words against a spouse. All forms of abuse have negative impacts on both the victim and on the relationship. They lead to traumatic experiences, anxiety, loneliness, and lack of trust.

As adults, every couple seeks to form an attachment figure with their partner. We all want to feel heard, appreciated, motivated, valued, admired, and loved by our partner. We all want to experience compassion. We all want to feel confident. We all want to feel respected. We all want to maintain our sense of self-worth. Abuse in marriage destroys all positive expectations of a healthy relationship, thereby creating disappointment and a feeling of loss in the victim.

Most abuse in marriages begins early in the relationship. Research shows that, “in dating relationships, 80% of young adults experience psychological abuse, 20% experience physical abuse, and 10% experience sexual abuse.”¹

What causes abuse?

Obviously, most abuses arise as a result of one individual attempting to exert control over the other. Individuals with a dominant personality style find it hard to change. In order to have their way, such persons adopt abusive behaviors as a control tactic. They intimidate their partner, sometimes using fear to strip their victim of their self-worth. They make them feel sorry even when such victims are not guilty of any offense.

Most abusers are said to have experienced abuse growing up. Such individuals often witnessed violence and abusive language in their childhood environment. They become used to physical and emotional violence as authentic ways of expressing themselves. Abusers have anger issues. They see it as normal to vent their anger. They become defensive in their conversations. Such persons present strength externally while protecting their weaknesses internally.

What are the effects of abuse on its victims?

Individuals brought up in an abusive

environment feel its negative effects. In a report released by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, “College students use alcohol heavily and habitually: 59% of full-time college students drink regularly, 39% binge (having five or more drinks on one day in past month), and 13% drink excessively (binge drinking more than 5 days in past month; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, 2014). Moreover, college students are at risk of suicide—it is the second leading cause of death among college-aged adults (18–24 years old), and its prevalence has increased from 12.60 deaths to 13.23 deaths per 100,000 from 2010–2014.”² That means abusive relationships can have disastrous consequences. Abusive marriages experience high rates of separation and divorce.

Why do victims not always seek help?

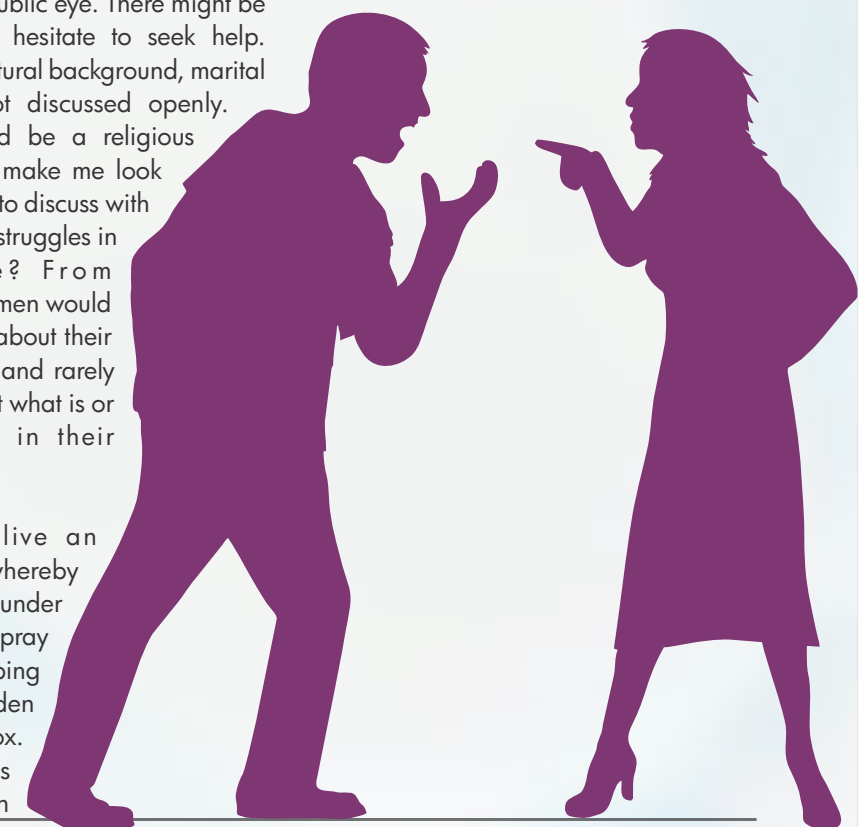
Some abused spouses don’t want to open up about their relationships for various reasons. They have often become mistrustful. They wonder if they can ever find “normal” – or if they even deserve it. Questions arise: Am I talking to someone who can help me? What are the chances that things would actually change? In most cases, the dilemma for women is how their man would perceive bringing their dirty laundry into the public eye. There might be other reasons to hesitate to seek help. Maybe in their cultural background, marital problems are not discussed openly. Then, there could be a religious question: does it make me look like a bad person to discuss with someone else my struggles in my marriage? From experience, most men would prefer not to talk about their marital situations and rarely initiate talks about what is or isn’t going on in their relationship.

Most couples live an avoidant style whereby things are shoved under the carpet. Some pray to God while keeping problems in a hidden “untouchable” box. Such spouses dread having an

open conversation mostly because of the consequences. They avoid stoking the emotional fire because the abuser will always get defensive. Such relationships merely accumulate dirt that clog the wheels of a healthy marriage.

Can Catholic couples seek therapy?

Yes, Catholic couples can seek therapy. One caveat – men generally have different opinions about themselves and about seeking couples therapy. Whereas women often willingly volunteer for therapy, men are generally reluctant to seek help. Women will suggest therapy, even if they are the victim of their husband’s behavioral problems. Men might accept therapy as a last resort for their own behavioral problems. Psychologists say, “Men also “drag their feet” when it comes to couple therapy. Men are consistently slower than women to recognize a relational problem, decide upon the need for help, and contact a provider.”¹ Men don’t like to talk about stress because it deflates their ego. The fact is this, “When female partners suggest couple therapy, men who endorse traditional masculine norms may reject therapy in an effort to save face or retain power.”¹ This is especially true in a patriarchal social structure where men are viewed to be in authority over women in most aspects of society.



Couples must recognize when to seek help and when to change certain behavioral patterns in their relationship. Seeking therapy is a good way to search for genuine solutions to abuses in marriage, especially with Christian therapists. Therapists help couples “to recognize a relational problem severe enough to warrant professional help and overcome any cultural bias, stigma, and/or anxiety”.

What can be done?

The first truth is the truth about the self. In psychology, attachment theorists call it a “working model of self or view of self.” It is the individual's perception of himself/herself and how this view of the self affects the individual's functioning in relation to others. I have noticed that most men see their ego only in relation to what others think about them. Such men treat their wives well in public only because of what others may think or say about them. In the eyes of outsiders, they seem to be the best husbands. When alone, however, they treat their wives much differently. An example of this was a couple who came to me struggling to get along. I met with them individually to try to determine the source of their problems. When speaking with the wife, she warned me to be aware of a trick

her husband often performed, which was to shed tears to gain sympathy for his side of the story. When I met with him, that is exactly what happened. His actions confirmed what his wife had said, that he was not actually upset but trying to gain sympathy. To be true to your “self,” each spouse must have integrity in their dealings with each other and act the same towards each other in public as well as in private.

Meanwhile, prayer is a big component in the marriage relationship. When couples struggle, there is a great need to recognize the presence and the impact of God in their lives. Couples commit to each other and to God in their covenant relationship. Seeking God's help becomes a way to deepen their relationship with each other and with God – their source of divine sustenance. Prayer helps the individual to appreciate the need to be humble, present, and compassionate with their spouse in an open and selfless manner. In prayer, couples seek the greatest “therapy” in their relational problems.

Dealing with abuse implies dealing with one's abnormal behavior. Couples must recognize the negative impact of their behavior on the relationship. To deal with

dysfunction implies dealing with the false ego. Unnecessary reliance on the ego contributes to suffering among couples. False ego breeds pride and arrogance. It presents a distorted image of the self. It does not admit wrongdoing and does not accept corrections. However, once you are able to subdue your false ego, you can begin to deal with your anger issues.

Hey, abuser, you need help! You are sick! Heal from your anger! Seek help in prayer and in therapy.

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Fr. Vincent is a priest from Nigeria, currently serving as associate pastor at Christ the King Church in Maryland. Founder of the FA Ministry and FA Magazine, he holds a master's degree in Communication and is presently a doctoral student of Marriage and Family Therapy at Eastern University in Pennsylvania.



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The Art of Loneliness

By Meredith Rubeling



In this season of my life where almost everything seems transient, there remains one consistent experience: loneliness. Several years ago, while on a month-long mission trip in Tanzania, I experienced profound loneliness. Even though I was surrounded by people most of the time, I felt inexplicably *alone*. Part of that was because I was with people who spoke a language I couldn't understand. It was as if I was experiencing a prolonged period of silence, even in the midst of spoken words. I remember many nights after a long day of serving with the sisters at the mission when I would retreat to my bedroom for the night and quietly contemplate my existence. *Why am I here, what do You want me to do, what are You doing?* Those were the questions I asked God almost daily. I felt as if I was experiencing a miniature "existential crisis" of sorts. At times I questioned the overall purpose of my life, and why God had called me there specifically. I remember craving companionship. Although I saw the sisters daily, I felt so removed from them, as the only lay person in a religious community. It was so strange to experience so much isolation while being completely surrounded by others. I didn't know what else to do, so I brought my loneliness to

prayer.

One day in Adoration, quietly and beautifully, Jesus spoke to my heart and gave me momentary peace. He beckoned me to *keep my gaze on Him*. To ignore all my sin, all my pride, all my loneliness, the difficulty, and the discomfort; to focus on the One who made me, the One who loves me. It was as if He was telling me *be not afraid, I am here with you*. I experienced such a beautiful consolation while I was there, and I often reflect back to that moment, to that teeny, tiny glimpse of His love for me. That moment gave me strength, the strength to finish the mission He had sent me on.

It has been several years since my adventure in Tanzania, many things have changed, but many more have remained the same. One thing that has developed is my understanding of loneliness. I have had many conversations recently with close family members and friends regarding happiness, peace and loneliness. Recently, one of the most beautiful insights came after speaking with a friend about her teenage daughter. My friend had mentioned that her daughter was struggling with not succumbing to the temptations that are ever present in high school. In a world where

everyone is dating at a young age and behaving in a certain way, it is easy to feel like an "alien" if you are the least bit different. Her daughter was struggling with feeling alone. My friend wanted to see if I had any encouragement or any advice for her daughter, in an attempt to ease the discomfort her daughter was experiencing. My answer to her surprised even me. I did not resort to the words I would have used in past conversations, words that would pacify, in an attempt to "make everything better." Rather, I found myself talking about the many beautiful experiences I have had with loneliness. In our lives, in choosing to live in accordance with Christ and His Church, we will sometimes be lonely. In the spiritual life, we are encouraged and expected to make Jesus the first priority in our lives. And oftentimes, those choices, the choices to do hard things, to be different and to choose wisely, to choose Christ, can leave us lonely.

I find myself in my present state of life experiencing such profound bouts of loneliness, especially in regard to dating. It is not easy watching my friends enter into relationships, becoming engaged, getting married and having babies. I have thought so many times, Why Lord, why hasn't it

happened for me yet? What's the hold up? It has been so easy for me to equate happiness with getting into a relationship. I so desperately want to be seen, to be loved, and to be cherished. For so long I have thought that a relationship would fill the emptiness I so often experience. But, that's not how life works. Something I have realized, something I am reluctantly learning to embrace, is that loneliness is part of life because we are not meant for this world.

In my third-order Carmelite meeting sometime ago, we discussed St. Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle and her imagery of the spiritual marriage. My Carmelite brothers and sisters (most of whom are married), narrated how difficult marriage is, especially when the bible and St. Teresa paint such a beautiful picture of what marriage ought to be. They explained how living out holy matrimony is so, so difficult. While it is an incredibly beautiful reflection of God and His Church, marriage is often

lonely, hard, and painful. I thought to myself how many times I had longed to get married; how I have clung to the hope that marriage may somehow ease the loneliness I feel. I shared my thoughts at the meeting that day. As I shared, I felt as if a truth that I have always known was renewed in my mind. Getting married doesn't automatically mean that I will no longer experience loneliness.

Once again, I could not help reflecting on the idea that we are not meant for this world. We are meant to be perfectly united with Jesus in heaven. And somewhere deep inside us, in our souls, regardless of how happy or peaceful we may feel at any point and time on this earth, our souls will be restless until we rest in Him. What a happy thought! And what a relieving thought! To think that I don't have to wish away loneliness because God intended for me to experience it. Although I hope and pray that one day I can meet a Godly man, and we can help each other become saints, and

raise holy children, I know that I will never be perfectly happy or immune from loneliness. Marriage and family will bring me companionship and joy, but, I will still experience loneliness.

It is such a beautiful gift that God gives us little consolations here on earth amidst the difficulties of life. We are able to know Him and love Him, but even more importantly, we are loved by Him. In addition to His goodness, God also allows us to experience loneliness and trials for a special reason. It helps us realize that we are made for something more.



Meredith Rubeling – I am passionate about my Catholic faith and relationship with Jesus. It influences my life daily, especially my work as a cardiac registered nurse and clinical nursing instructor. I enjoy spending time with family and friends, traveling, writing, and spreading truth. Meredith writes for the FA magazine on singles.





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Fashion's A Stitch

Divine Intimacy: Friendship *with* God makes us whole

By Patti Rubin



"Oh, the humanity of it all," were the famous words of newscaster Walter Cronkite at the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. But that epic scene fell to a distant second compared to the thousands of stories that resulted from the U.S. 9-11 terrorist attacks. Sr. Bethany Madonna of the Sisters of Life related a story of a man she'd met. After the first World Trade Center tower was hit in New York, he, along with many others ran to the subway station in hopes of getting a train out to safety. When the twin towers collapsed, all of lower Manhattan including the underground subway was filled with heavy black soot and debris so that you couldn't even see your hand in front of your face. The people in the subway stood in shocked, terrified silence. Suddenly, a lone voice pierced the darkness, "Follow me. I know the way out." It was the voice of a blind man who begged at that train stop every day. The people formed a human chain, linking arm in arm, and the blind beggar led them all out to the street above. He lived in total

darkness but became the light that day. They never looked at him the same way again. The humanity of it all indeed. The beauty of humanity and God's passion for it is a love story. It's evident when humanity fell; "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16), to save us.

Consider for a moment the miracle of your life, the miracle of your conception. If your parents had conceived one month prior or one month after your conception, a different child would have been the result, not you. You wouldn't be here but God chose you. Have you ever considered the uniqueness of your fingerprints? The Lord drew a series of circles on your fingers that are completely different from the billions of other people in the world and they personally identify you. So, too, your voice box. The tone of your voice, its inflections, the way you sing, the way you laugh, is totally unique. When someone we love calls on the phone, doesn't just the sound of their voice

bring comfort? And when a loved one dies, don't we long to hear their voice just one more time? The space in your heart is totally unique too, and God needs the love that only you can provide. He thirsts for it. Yes, each of us is "fearfully and wonderfully made." (Ps. 139:14)

In the 1980s and 90s, there was a television show called *Cheers* about the customers at a Boston bar. They were all regulars of the bar and friends. The theme song for the show became iconic because of its catchy tune and truth of the lyrics. "Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name. And they're always glad you came. You want to be where you can see, our troubles are all the same, you want to be where everybody knows your name." Though it was a funny show, it also strikes at our deep desire for friendship, for being known and belonging and that feeling of home with people who love and understand us. The thing is, we're pre-programmed for this. It's what we

were made for. Some of the hallmarks of authentic friendship are loyalty, love, honesty, kindness, receptivity, joy, humor, and a willingness to lay down our life for the other. The book of Sirach tells us, "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price, no sum can balance his worth. A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy, such as he who fears God finds; for he who fears God behaves accordingly, and his friend will be like himself" (Sirach 6:14-17).

Human friendships are an image of the Great friendship. We were created for friendship with God. "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends," (John 15:15) Jesus tells us. Divine Intimacy leads to a knowledge of ourselves and God. In his book *Awakening Love*, Fr. Gregory Cleveland, O M V, states,

"Friendship is a profound form of love ... The word intimacy sounds like into-me-see." God sees into the depths of the human heart, probing its deepest recesses. He knows us better than we know ourselves. The more we enter into Him through time and prayer, the more He reveals Himself to us. It's in Him that we come to know our true selves, finding belonging and wholeness. It's in Him that we find hope and healing in the difficult circumstances of our life. It's in Him that we become a light to others, especially those in need. It's in Him

that we become a saint.

In the mid 1990's, I was a young housewife and mother raising my family, but my real work was about to begin. I suddenly became quite ill and, in the span of two short months, was practically bed-ridden. Suffering from extreme fatigue, every lymph node and joint in my body swelled. Just moving became painful and exhausting. The doctors couldn't seem to figure it out. It was quick and severe and made me feel isolated and alone. While I had a great support system, to me, everyone was healthy and enjoying life,

Eventually, I was diagnosed with Lyme disease, the result of a tick bite, given medication to cure it, slowly regained my health, and life returned to normal.

Several months later, I was reflecting on the experience and realized how much I missed the presence of Jesus. Though I still prayed, it had lost much of its passion. Somehow, it felt like He had slipped through my fingers, and in a strange way, I wanted to return to the illness only because I longed for His powerful, tender presence. Even in difficult circumstances, His yoke is indeed easy.

Holy friendships on earth are a blessing and reflection of God. They encourage and help us on the road to heaven. Divine Intimacy, or friendship with God, is what we're created for. The Lord is always calling us in

the happenings and circumstances of our lives. He begs to be recognized in the affection of family members, the joy of friendship, the smile of a child. And He is never tired searching for us in the gloomy subways of life, at times disguised as a beggar while His voice pierces the darkness, "Follow me. I am the way out."



Patti Rubin is a cradle Catholic who lives in Maryland with her family. She is the administrator of the Family Apostolate. Patti writes for the FA magazine

and I didn't fit in anymore. That kind of experience is a game changer because it forces you to focus on what's really important in life. I took it to God. The more I suffered, the deeper my prayer life became. I became immersed in God. The Mass was alive and profound, His passion became a source of contemplation. The presence of Jesus by my side felt tangible. Without knowing it, I had entered into Divine Intimacy and began to understand the words in Matthew 11:30 "For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."



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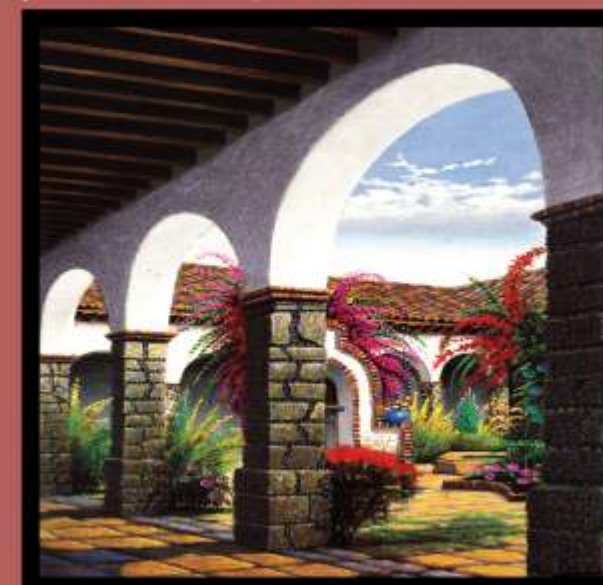
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Interview With FATHER CARLOS

associate pastor at Christ the King Church
in Glen Burnie, Maryland

FAITH CONQUERS CANCER

Fr. Carlos Osorio describes himself as a country boy, raised in a small village in Colombia, South America. He was adopted by his lovely parents when he was just two years old. While in Colombia, Fr. Carlos had many experiences arising from his desire to be a priest, one of which was doing missionary work among the very low income earners. At the age of 22, he moved to Spain, where he studied for three years trying to discern his vocation. He came to the United States about 10 years ago still in pursuit of a religious life. He completed his seminary formation in the Archdiocese of Baltimore and was ordained in 2015. Currently, the Colombian born priest is an associate pastor at Christ the King Parish, Glen Burnie MD, and ministers mostly to the Hispanic community with parishioners from over eighteen different countries of Latino origin. Being a priest for the Hispanic community for him has been a very active and engaging ministry. He loves being in people's company and loves exercising including going to the gym. His pet dog is Écho which he describes as a great companion during his battle with cancer.

FA: You have been diagnosed with cancer. What led to that diagnosis and what was your response?

Fr. C- It began in 2013. I was not feeling well and was sick all the time when it was noticed that I had a growth in my throat. Because I was always exercising and active, my doctor thought that it wasn't anything to be concerned about. However, he decided to run some tests anyway. When I got to the doctor's office to get the results, there was also a counselor in the room. Immediately, I knew it was not good news. I looked at the doctor and said, "Just tell me what's going on. I can take it." Then they told me I had cancer. It was so strange to me because I knew nothing about cancer. I never thought about whether I was going to die or not. I didn't tell anyone, not even my parents. In fact, they still don't know that I am sick. My mom has cancer, too, so I don't want to put another burden on them. Basically, I kept it a secret from everyone for about two years.

FA: Was your decision not to tell anyone part of your culture, personality, or personal belief?

Fr. C- It was my belief that by not telling anyone about the cancer, it would help me

be stronger. I could remain in denial and pretend it wasn't happening, which would help me stay positive and cope with it. But then one day at the doctor's office, as soon as the nurse started drawing my blood, I broke down and cried. I couldn't hold it in anymore. I was going through this all alone, and it was overwhelming. My silence about the cancer also had another

source: it had a little to do with pride. I didn't want to worry people, and I didn't want them to see me as dying. I didn't want them to offer sympathy or to keep asking, "Are you okay?" When I did finally start telling my story, I told those around me not to be sorry for me. I would prefer people to offer prayers for me. The sorrow is what makes me feel sick and lose my positive attitude.





medication, everything, is from money that I send them. If I'm afraid of death, it's because of concern over my parents, not because of me. I do believe that God will provide for them, but the human aspect of me still worries about them.

FA: What's your theology of sickness in relation to sin and guilt?

Fr. C- I hear some people, after being diagnosed with cancer, say, "It is because I sinned," and they start having guilt. They

start to examine themselves to see what they did. For me, it wasn't about that. It's something that just happened, something that I have to embrace and actually have embraced. It taught me to be there for people with minor illnesses. Each time I encounter people and share my story, they recognize that what they have to deal with in their situation might not be as difficult as they first imagined.

FA: Is there a way you think that priests could let people understand their humanity more?

Fr. C- The priest is human like any other person; he has just given God the primary role in his life. For example, this is my schedule: I wake up in the morning and do my morning prayer. I pray my Rosary when I shower because that's when I enjoy praying the Rosary. I go to Mass. I come back and have my breakfast. I go the office, respond to emails, check my missed calls, prepare my homily. I begin to see people who need counseling and other issues. The Hispanic community always loves to see their priest. I love to go to the gym; I play volleyball. I walk my dog. Sometimes I go to meetings. I have funerals, weddings, sick-calls, baptisms. Sometimes, I receive calls at odd hours from those needing Anointing of the Sick. The priest is simply on call 24/7.

FA: What side effects does your treatment produce?

Fr. C- I'm taking a chemotherapy medication that the medical experts described as gentler because my cancer was not initially aggressive. Recently, though, they discovered other problems related to the colon and intestine, and I have had seven surgeries for that. It has been a lot. Every time I go for surgery, my question is, "What else?" The side effect includes tiredness. Sometimes, I just want to be alone. My mood changes and I feel edgy. I have to hold myself together and not let people feel what I feel. That can be hard, especially when people need me.

FA: How do you handle your health challenges and still serve your parish?

Fr. C- I believe that my energy comes from prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist. I hold Adoration every Wednesday for the Hispanic community. I celebrate Healing Mass for them, too. I have a lot of people praying for me and lifting me up. One particular lady who visits the Blessed Sacrament regularly, sends me a picture each time she is there with a message, "I'm praying for you." Many others tell me, "I'm praying the Rosary for you," or, "I have offered Mass for you." These prayers are so

important to me – they give me hope.

FA: What do you think changed after your diagnosis with cancer?

Fr. C- It was part of the overall process for me to understand people more, to appreciate humanity better. Before seminary, I had been on my own for many years. I had big dreams. My dreams made me prideful. They also isolated me from others and kept me alone. During my seminary and after my ordination as a deacon, things changed. I realized that life was not just about me. It is important to know who we are and how we are called to serve, which helps us to be in the state of holiness. This helped me to purify my soul and to be in that path that God called me to be namely, to be holy. But then after my cancer diagnosis, I discovered that I was not invincible. It helped me to understand people's suffering and to offer compassion. It helped me know how to walk in other people's shoes. I realized that cancer or illness can attack anyone.

FA: Do you ever entertain any fear of death?

Fr. C- No. My fear is not about me dying. It's about leaving my parents financially destitute because they depend on me 100%. They eat because I provide. Their

The truth is that the priest does more than just the Mass. People also need to understand that we are human, that we make mistakes, and that we are weak. If they could see our realities, and our own crosses, then they would say, "Oh, I need to be more understanding with this priest."

FA: How has your immigrant experience affected your health and ministry?

Fr. C- Being here in the U.S. does have enormous challenges. I miss my parents a lot. I am in the process of getting my green card and have not been able to see them for two years. I have not even been able to get a picture of them because they live in a remote village where they have no access to the internet. When I was previously able to go home for visits, each time I saw them they looked older, more wrinkled. Their memory is fading, and the change is very noticeable. I have not celebrated Christmas with my people for fifteen years and haven't celebrated their birthdays with them. As for my ministry, I'm blessed to be able to separate those worries for my family and still be there pastorally for the people. My vocation is to be with Christ and to make Him available to the people in the sacraments. I know that my priority now is to be a priest and be with the people whom He wants me to serve here in the U.S.

FA: We know you have a dog that you cherish. Can you tell us a little about her?

Fr. C- The name of my dog is ÉCHO which is a Greek word that translates, "You are mine. You belong to me." She's about four years old, and I have had her for three years. As a puppy, she was abused, shy, and afraid, but once she saw me, she and I had an automatic connection. She is very nice and kind, not needy, and she even takes care of me sometimes. For example, if I

work late and fall asleep on the couch, she gets up at about 2:00am to wake me up. She barks at me until I move from the couch to my bed. Then, she's quiet, knowing I'm in the proper place to sleep. Echo has been a great companion in my experience with cancer.

FA: Have diet or lifestyle changes made a difference in your recovery?

Fr. C- Actually, if you're sick, you have to help yourself through diet. I was introduced to a program called "Chris Beat Cancer" by a friend. That's one of the best gifts I have received. Lately, I have changed my eating habits (diet), eating more fruits and veggies, and juicing a lot. My mood has improved, and it's been a wonderful addition. It demands preparation and commitment on my part but it's working.

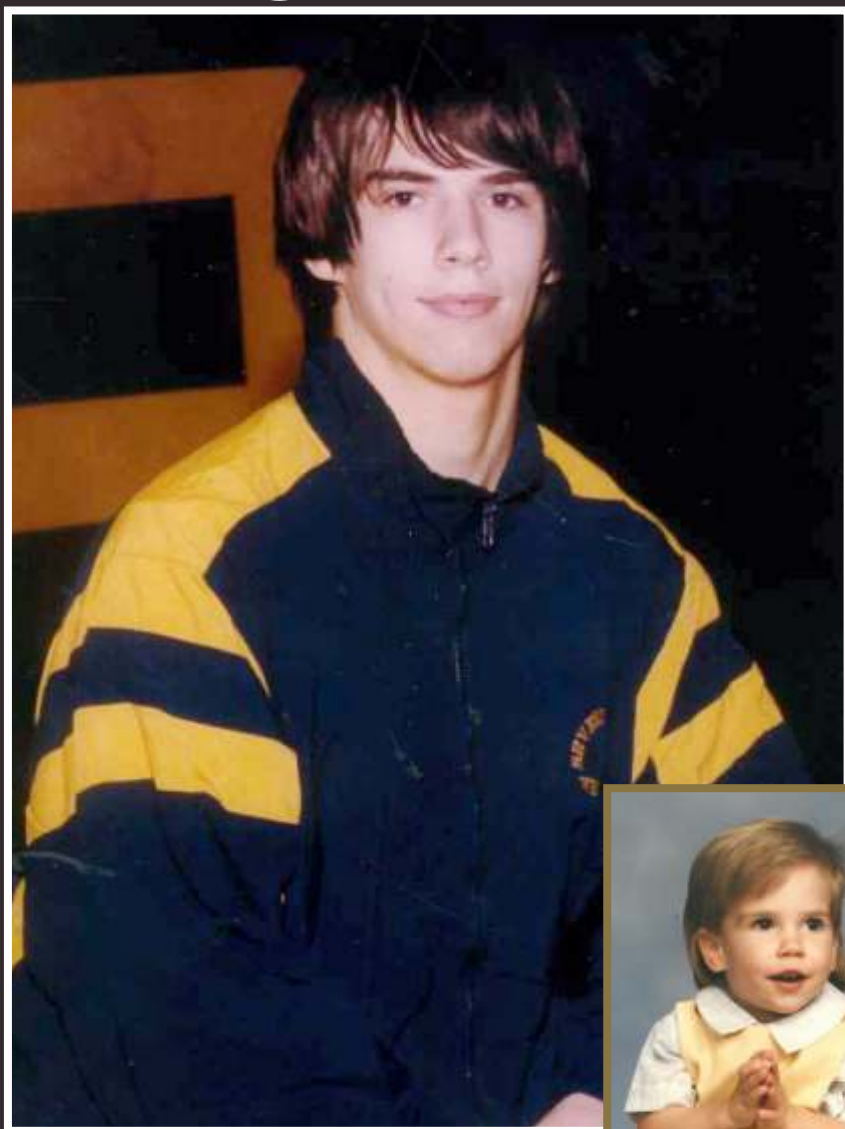
FA: What advice can you offer those who are suffering?

Fr. C- Don't victimize yourself if you are sick. Don't feel sorry for yourself and then put yourself down. Embrace your challenges. Look for people who can lift you up. Make good friends. Do positive things such as going to watch uplifting movies. Go for a walk or for a run. Do outdoor things and enjoy God's creation. If you have cancer, don't think that being diagnosed with that means you're going to die. But even if the doctors say it is terminal, do things that will leave positive memories. Realize that you're not alone. It's a bonus to have supportive people around you, but most importantly, having God and having your faith surpasses all. My belief is that with such an attitude, nothing, cancer or otherwise, can defeat you.



"The struggle between our faith and our humanness while grieving."

Losing ADAM



"Losing a child makes you grieve with a sadness you didn't know existed."

By Michele and Michael Nagle

Our faith says to be joyful because your loved one is with Christ in eternal life but the human side of us drowns in sorrow. When someone we love leaves this world, why do we have so much sadness instead of joy? Is our humanness stronger than our faith?

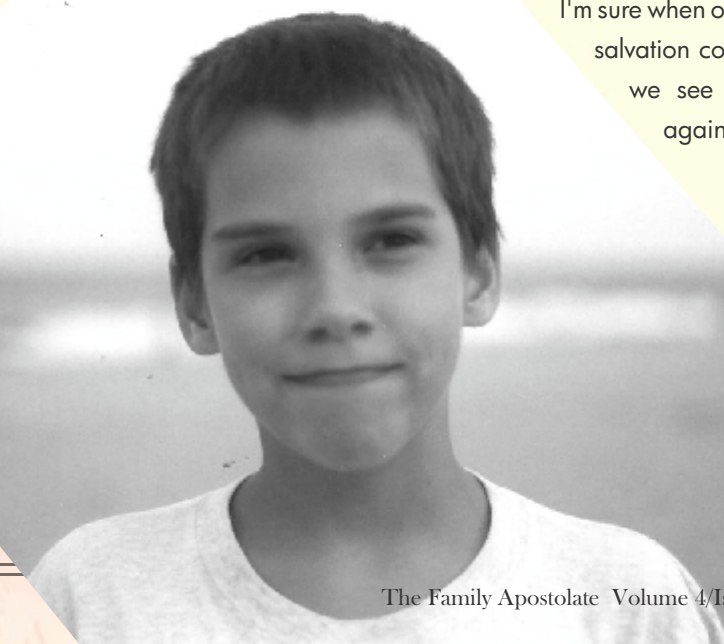
How do you have faith when you lose a beloved child? Losing a child makes you grieve with a sadness you didn't know existed. Our faith always taught us that our goal in life is to get to heaven and be joyful about it. But now that our son, Adam, had entered heaven, how could we have so much sorrow over it? We didn't want him in heaven at the time he passed; we wanted him here with us. So, did we really believe in God's promise? Did we really have faith? We said "Jesus, I trust in You," but did we? We said, "Let your will be done", but was it your will that Adam would die? And if so, why?

1 Thessalonians 5:16 says, "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you". But how do you ever rejoice again? We couldn't. Our hearts wouldn't allow it.

One Sunday after Mass, I (Michele) was in

church; it was empty and I was crying. I was angry. Our Pastor came in at that moment and I said to him, "I want my son back. I'm angry that he's not here and I'm angry that my family has this sadness". He said to me, "You want Adam, but you don't need him. The only thing you need is God." He also said that Adam was mine to care for, but he did not belong to me. He belonged to God. That may seem like harsh words in print but when Father spoke them to me, it had a strong impact. He was right: our children are not ours to keep forever, they are children of God first. They are given to us to care for, to nurture, to love and to lead back to God at God's own time. The most important role we have as a parent is to lead our children to their salvation, to prepare them for eternal life with God, their true Father. As I spent time in Adoration reflecting on what our Pastor said, I started to realize that Adam also does not need us, because he is in the presence of our heavenly Mother, Mary, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has their love, which is greater than any love we could have given him. He now sees the face of Christ and is in the presence of His loving Sacred Heart, which is greater than his earthly father's love. He has been held by our Blessed Mother, who has a love for him greater than any love that I, as his physical mother, could give.

I'm sure when our day of salvation comes and we see our son again, we



will thank and praise God for taking him so soon; for allowing him to leave this secular world and enter heaven at such a young age. We believe, then, our sadness will turn to glorious joy realizing that God allowed Adam to come home so soon, that our son was with Christ in eternal life. For God did not take Adam, that was not His plan. But, by his death, Adam will have eternal happiness, eternal joy and peace. That is God's plan. Then, we started focusing on the graces and blessings that God has given us.

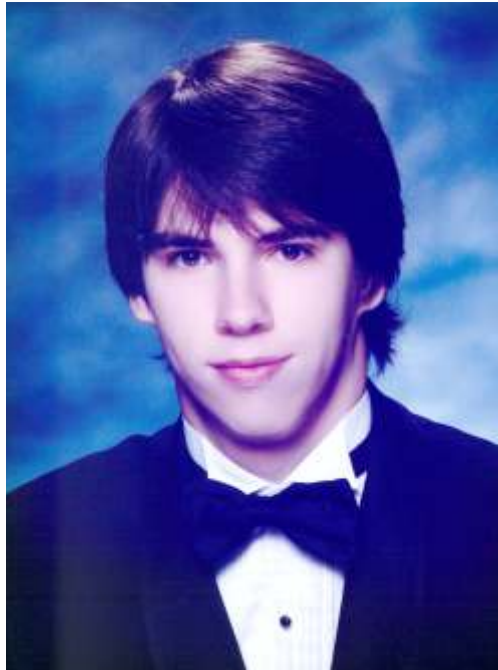
The night before Adam passed, we went



to Saturday evening Mass. Immediately after Mass, he walked over to the Tabernacle, knelt down and prayed. I had never seen him do this before and I was so grateful to witness it...and to think it was less than 24 hours before his entrance into eternity. This memory gives me so much peace. Was Adam praying at the Tabernacle just a coincidence? Was God leading and preparing him? Was Adam asking for forgiveness of his sins? All I know is that it gives us such joy that Adam prayed at the Tabernacle, that he understood that the body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was contained within there, and that I got to witness it. That is a

blessing, a grace that God has given us.

The grieving ebbs and flows in both intensity and duration, but as a part of our human nature, it is always with us. Therefore, more than ever we turn to scripture for healing. And our healing began when we started serving others. The Evangelist Mark (10:45) tells us "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." Serving others, as Christ did, has lifted us out of our sorrow; we now have days where instead of feeling the loss of Adam, we feel his presence. His body is



still have conversations with them, but the conversation is through prayer. We now turn to Adam for intercessory prayer to help draw us and our family closer to Christ. Suffering truly does work to the good in the end.

We now live by the words in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." To all grieving parents, we leave you with the words of the prophet Nehemiah 8:10, "Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the Lord is your strength."



Our son Adam was 28 years old and the youngest of our three sons. He had mild autism, was very high functioning, and worked every day. He had four seizures in his life and was on an anti-seizure medication. On the morning of November 22, 2015, the feast day of St. Cecilia, Adam was home alone and had a Grand Mal Seizure, went into cardiac arrest and passed from this life. We miss him every minute of every day.



Michael and Michele Nagle have been married for 39 years. They have three sons and a daughter in law, with a second daughter in law joining the family soon. They are both active members of St. Philip Neri Parish in Maryland



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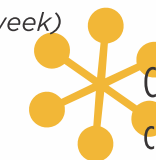
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RAISING AN **AUTISTIC** CHILD:

Our Pains and Joys

By Elnora M. Guzman

The inspiring promise from God is the gift of his Son who came and suffered, that we might have life in full. It's life that is beautiful, full of joys and excitement. We marvel and boast of our successful accomplishments. But when life becomes tainted by the storms, hardships, and difficulties, we become almost frustrated. Then our faith weakens; we withdraw, give up and question God, "Why me? Why do I have to suffer this way? What have I done? Where did I fail?" In tears, this was the first reaction when my precious eldest daughter was diagnosed with autism and moderate mental retardation. I felt like my whole world had crumbled and I asked myself where exactly I went wrong. What had I done?

Alora was our first child. When I was pregnant, I did my best to eat healthy. For 9 months, my husband and I were excited and looked forward to her arrival. I was 2 weeks delayed and finally delivered her by

Caesarian section. She was a healthy 7 pound-baby and we took her home after 3 days. We showered her with love, care and affection. She received the Sacrament of Baptism at 4 months old and was a happy, healthy child with normal development. She loved to smile and pose for the camera. At 6 months old, she enjoyed playing hide and seek with her dad in her walker. She began to utter words at 10 months and started to walk by 14 months. Alora loved playing with puzzles and toys. Of course, we regularly took her to the pediatrician for her required visits and immunizations.

When she turned two years old, we noticed she stopped talking, did not make eye contact anymore and was running around in all directions. She could not sit still and was not behaving like other two year-old children. We were concerned about what was happening to her because it didn't seem normal. After referrals to different programs and social workers,

arrangements were made for Alora to meet with a panel of professionals which consisted of a special educator, a pediatrician, a speech therapist and others to help diagnose her. She was given toys to play with and instructions on what to do. Two weeks later, the devastating report arrived in the mail. Crying, I read the results. My child was diagnosed with Autism syndrome and mental retardation. I felt as if my world was completely crashing. It was too painful to accept that my first child, my beloved daughter, suffered from this. What about her future? How exactly could we explain this? We had high hopes and expectations for her but then we felt like we had failed. But I did not lose hope. Her social worker gave us a lot of support and assured us that we had not done anything wrong. She referred us to Child Find who recommended that we enroll Alora in a special education school.

Alora received a lot of beneficial services

and assistance. She was still non-verbal and could not communicate. She had lots of issues in school. One day she bit one of her classmates on the arm. Another time she poked her teacher's arm with a pencil. At home she would break a lot of things, throw porcelain plates, mugs and glasses. One day she played with some of my 18 Karat jewelry, threw it away and we could not locate them. She had started to talk with the help she received at school but when we tried to ask her about the jewelry, she would

simply repeat our question. She used to escape outside our home without our knowledge and we called 911 many times to locate her. One time she was found on our neighbor's deck. She would walk down our street and wander into the next community. We had to install a door alarm that would sound when it was opened. She used to cry and scream in the middle of the night and randomly during the day. She would bite herself and bang her head on the wall. She used to bite and push me.

When we were invited to parties at friends' homes, she used to break and damage their property, open their refrigerator and go up to their bedrooms. As a result, our friends stopped inviting us. She used to roll on the floor and rip her clothes off when upset. When we went to church, she made a lot of noise and could not keep still. One time while attending mass, Alora took off her shoes and threw them at the altar, narrowly missing the priest. Another time while receiving Holy Communion, she hit

Alora





Alora advanced so well that she was promoted to move to a regular school with special education. She was transferred to a local high school which was closer to our new home. Unfortunately, she became overwhelmed with the boisterous atmosphere. One day I got a report from her teacher that she hit a student with a broom. Another time she poked one of the student teachers with a pencil. Then another time she pulled the fire alarm and the whole school had to evacuate. She got suspended many times by the assistant principal and had to undergo a behavioral modification

program. A bright spot was that her special education teacher was soft spoken, patient and did an excellent job. Alora liked her very much. Her technician also helped her with her homework, teaching her math, english, grammar and literature. She successfully graduated from high school along with her younger sister. states that has a program called Autism Waiver and Alora qualified for it. Another program called The Whole Self Center also provided services to her. They came to our home and trained Alora to take a bath independently, do household chores, such as washing dishes and doing laundry, and helped her with math and reading. Now she can do a 500 piece puzzle and sings beautifully. She no longer rips her clothes off but knows how to mend and sew them. She even knows how to do embroidery. She is currently attending a day program for adults with disabilities. A van picks her up in the morning and drops her back home in the afternoon. Alora dresses herself, prepares her own breakfast, packs her lunch independently, then waits for the van to pick her up. They do various activities and community service projects. The government offers a lot of services to individuals with inborn disabilities. Now, she helps me a lot at home in doing household chores and is so clean and organized. She is sociable and loves to dance. She can memorize all our birthdays and all the dates of our vacations. She has technical skills and is a talented lady who knows how to download music from the

the ciborium and all the hosts fell to the floor. The priest had to scoop up the spilled hosts and use the reserved ones from the tabernacle to distribute to the people. We had a lot of stress in our life from her outbursts and unusual behavior but this did not stop us from going to church. We did not turn away from God. Our strong Catholic faith was deeply rooted in us by our parents from childhood and our Filipino culture helped us to withstand the trials and hardships. It made us even closer to God. Our fervent prayers and deep love of God prevented us from drifting away. God gave us light, hope and rewards. In spite of the difficulties, Alora made progress at school. She received her Sacrament of Confirmation after attending Sunday school with her sisters. During the Christmas program, I suggested to her music teacher to let Alora sing a solo. She sang "Silver and Gold" with piano accompaniment and memorized the whole song with the right tempo. Everyone applauded with tears her performance and accomplishment.



computer to her Ipod. Alora turned 26 this past December 28, 2018 and was filled with joy while blowing out her birthday candles. She regularly attends Mass with us and receives Holy Communion. She is so close to her 3 sisters and they are tightly bonded.

Now we realize that Alora is not a burden but a precious gift and a blessing to us from God. We love her and are confident that she will be taken cared of. She has three younger sisters who love her and will look after her when my husband and I can no longer attend to her. And above all, God will always be there to love, guide and take care of her until the end of time.

I know that some parents are going through

similar challenges with raising autistic children. Our story is meant to encourage such parents and families. We didn't find it easy to endure Alora's behavioral issues. But she taught us to be patient. We encourage such parents to be patient. Children like Alora understand the language of love and care even though it is hard for them to express. Just be patient, loving, caring and optimistic with your child. There are many available resources provided by the government to help you so you aren't alone. We explored the resources that Maryland provides and it was very helpful. Faith in God is one big piece. The more you believe, the more you garner strength for the difficult times. Yes, it might be discouraging at times, but faith ignites our hidden energy. Always look up

to God since He knows all things. Children like Alora bring special blessings to the family because they help us to express our faith, love, and hope in the most intimate manner. Caring for them demonstrates our real sacrificial love that connects us with Christ's suffering and death on the Cross. Such is the symbol of love for humanity including those physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually challenged. In the words of Saint Paul, we can do all things in Christ who strengthens us.



Elnora Guzman works as a Blood Bank Clinical Laboratory Scientist. She has been a charismatic core leader in Kuwait and is currently the trainer and coordinator of the Lector Ministry in her parish at St Lawrence Catholic Church in Maryland.

FINDING HOLINESS IN SUFFERING

By Sister Mary Alexis Fisher, OSP
Oblate Sister of Providence



Quotes from St. Paul's Letters to the Romans and the Philippians remind us of the significance that suffering transforms our lives into holiness.

God blessed me tremendously with two families. I am number seven of eleven siblings and I had two loving parents who sacrificed so much for the good of us all. Of course, I also have my religious family and am doubly blessed to have the support of both. Most recently, I experienced a great deal of physical suffering having to undergo a life-threatening spinal surgery. Before that time, I was able to move around like

lightning, up and down the stairs, through the halls of the convent, around the grounds and wherever I had to go. We take so much for granted, at times, when we are young and healthy. But each day that we live, we become a little less-younger than we were the day before. However, with the sufferings that we endure, if used properly, enable us to become more closely united to God. And we realize that the sufferings of the present are nothing as compared with the glory that awaits us for all eternity. The daily prayers offered for me before, during surgery, and until the present day by family and friends were remarkable! After being released from the hospital

- “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.”

Romans 8:18

- “..., but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope.”

Romans 5:3-4

- “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:13

following surgery, complications sent me back two days later. The doctor informed me that I would have to undergo another surgery. Immediately, my dear Oblate Sisters of Providence, blood family, friends and so many other supportive persons prayed and I as well. The day came for the proposed second surgery and that very morning, blood tests proved that it was not necessary. Instead I could undergo a series of injections as treatments.

What a blessing!!!!

Throughout both my pre-woman-religious life and afterwards, I have always believed in the power of prayer in order



“Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

Hebrews 12:14

However, it was especially during my time of physical suffering and confinement that the confirmation of all things being made possible through Christ who strengthens us, was so very evident! God has brought us a mighty long way and will never leave us. What a friend we have in Jesus! He took upon Himself, through the Cross at Calvary, all of our sins. We have, as a result of Christ's death and resurrection, been made free!

God's grace is certainly enough for me, for us! When my pain was more intense, with God's grace, I was able to consciously make an effort to accept and offer it up for my own sins, those of my loved ones and of the whole world! And it was through the acceptance of God's goodness and how Christ suffered so much for each of us that I was able to place it all in God's hands! Knowing the sufferings of Mother Lange, other members of my religious congregation, family who are now enjoying their heavenly reward especially my own parents, four siblings, and so many other relatives and friends, they were of tremendous support to me having persevered through suffering. Thus, they allowed themselves to enter into a deeper relationship with God. As we read in **1 Peter 1:6-7**, “In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the

genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Suffering unites us with Christ, it purifies, transforms and allows us to realize that we are not the ones in control but that God ultimately is and we, through obedience to God's will, are made holy and pleasing to Our Almighty God. This is not just the case with physical suffering but with all forms of suffering. We must remember that God loves us unconditionally, regardless of the vocation to which we have been called. God will never forsake us! Nothing will ever happen to us that together, with God, we will not be able to handle!

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14

God asks of us that we strive to be at peace with everyone and to be holy. Imagine the lives of the saints! They were, none of them, perfect! We are called to be holy and we do this by relying on God's grace throughout all that we have to suffer, our trials and tribulations. We will then be transformed and will be made holy in God's eyes just like the saints!

Mother Lange, who founded the Oblate Sisters of Providence on July 2, 1829 leaves us a great example with her life. The Oblate Congregation was founded in Baltimore, Maryland and is the first congregation of women religious of African-descent in the world. Having been an Oblate Sister of Providence for fifty golden years, our history has been marked by many challenges. We were founded long before the Emancipation Proclamation for the purpose of educating persons of color, those who were considered second-class citizens. Now, our dear and beloved foundress, Mother Mary Lange, is a candidate for sainthood. Servant of God Mary Lange was a woman of faith who suffered greatly and left her spiritual daughters, in particular, the following legacy: “Our Sole wish is to do the will of God.” Aren't we blessed to experience God's intimacy in our experiences of suffering? Yet, this suffering is, as Saint Paul says, “Nothing to be compared with the glory to be revealed at the end of time.”



Sister Mary Alexis Fisher, OSP was born in Pascagoula, MS and is the former Superior General (19th--2009-2017) of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Sister has served in various administrative positions and in ministry on teaching assignments throughout the US, Costa Rica, and Central America. She is presently the Treasurer General of the OSP Congregation in Baltimore, MD. Sister holds an MBA Degree from the University of Maryland at College Park.

I find it exciting and comforting to look back at my life and see that God's hand truly is in everything. He is just asking for our cooperation with His plan. In 2016, my world was turned upside down by the discovery of an unexpected life-threatening autoimmune disease. Through God, prayer, and diet I was healed. I hope that in sharing my story I can help others to be aware of God's presence especially in times of trial and to learn the healing power of good nutrition.

It began when I went to see my primary care doctor because I was feeling extremely tired and losing weight for no reason. When I called for the bloodwork results, the doctor said to me, "If you don't feel well you should go right to the hospital." My liver enzymes were about 20 times higher than normal. It turned out that I had autoimmune hepatitis which is an autoimmune disease where the immune system malfunctions and tries to kill the liver. It was very close to succeeding.

My doctor then had my bloodwork re-checked to make sure it was not a diagnostic error and discovered that my liver was actually getting worse. So, I followed up with a local liver specialist who told me that I would need to begin taking heavy doses of steroids immediately in order to shut down my immune system and save my liver. He said that I would need to be on the steroids for the rest of my life. I had heard about the dangers associated with long term steroid use so I asked him if there were any nutritional treatments I could try. He said to me, "You better start taking this seriously! You are about a month or so away from being hospitalized due to liver failure."

Then, the Hand of God came in! My husband had previously seen a man named Dr. Fuhrman on PBS who was curing people of many illnesses nutritionally. I also happened to have a close friend who was cured of a different autoimmune disease by Dr. Fuhrman's diet. What are the odds of that? Therefore, I began his autoimmune diet the very next day after I received the bloodwork results. This timing was critical. I am still amazed that I did this. In hindsight, I see that God had been preparing me for this battle and had provided the weapons to win it *before* I was even sick.

After being frightened by the liver specialist, I consulted with Dr. Fuhrman. Although my liver enzyme levels were around 500 (normal is 6-29), he believed the diet could still help me. Should I listen to the several doctors who insisted I begin the steroids or go for the diet? I decided to continue with Dr. Fuhrman's autoimmune diet, cautiously optimistic.

The diet is very simple. The basic premise is that there are generally 2 possible triggers for autoimmune diseases: animal products and/or gluten. Therefore, I needed to eliminate both and eat lots of nutrient dense plant based whole foods. This meant no more meat, fish, eggs, milk,

cheese, or gluten as well as little to no salt, oil, and sugar. After just 2 weeks on the diet my liver enzymes began to improve. After ONE MONTH on the diet, my liver enzymes improved by more than half! Therefore, to the amazement of my liver specialist, I never had to have any steroids! I was amazed at the power of food. The enzymes did go back up one time after I unknowingly

consumed WHEY (milk) in 2 store-bought smoothies. Therefore, animal products were definitely a trigger for me.

As my healing progressed, I had a prolonged time where my results seemed to flatline just outside the normal range. I was still consuming gluten at daily Mass, but I only received the "low

GOD'S

HAND IS IN EVERYTHING!

THE SAVING POWER OF DIET

By: Kelly Molino



gluten" Eucharist. This contains less than .002% gluten in a host the size of a quarter. So, I decided to switch to just the Precious Blood for a time. In 2 months, I had a significant improvement and a month later, my liver enzymes were completely in the normal range! In total, it took one year on the diet to be cured and truly the triggers were animal products and gluten.

God didn't give me an unexplained miracle cure. He gave me a greater gift by teaching me about the power of good nutrition. I know this information is not meant just for me and that is why I want to share it with everyone. Now I feel confident feeding my husband and children knowing that I am protecting them from heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and autoimmune diseases just by increasing the amount of plant based whole foods they eat. This radical change in lifestyle was not easy. God knew that it would be hard for me. That is why when I prayed to St. Joseph about 20 years ago to choose a husband for me, he picked my husband Lou who is very health conscious. Initially, I found my husband's healthy eating habits very annoying because it is hard to enjoy a Twinkie when your husband is looking at you disapprovingly. This "annoying" trait has now been another one of God's greatest gifts to me. Lou embraced our new diet wholeheartedly and I couldn't have done it without his overwhelming support. It is heartwarming for me to see that God does everything for our good even **years** in advance. He just needs our cooperation.

I am eternally grateful for all the intercessory prayers offered for me from all my family and friends. I know that God answered those prayers by leading me to this whole food, plant-based lifestyle before it was too late and by giving me the support I needed to stick with it. This experience has helped me to trust Him more and remember that God is always working for our good, especially during difficult times. We just need to ask for the grace to follow His direction. As St. Vincent Pallotti wrote in a letter, "God is always with us. If we have confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, everything will go well with us... First let us stand firm in our confidence in God and open ourselves to the providence of God... without which it is not possible for us to withstand either a small or a great difficulty."

The benefits of a whole food plant-based diet can be found in these two interesting documentaries called, "What the Health?" and "Forks Over Knives."



Kelly Molino is a happily married wife and homeschooling mother of two teenagers. She lives in Ellicott City, MD and has a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Special Education.

Holy Smoke!

Why does the Church burn incense?

By: Family Apostolate Catechesis Team

Recently, I had the great privilege of seeing the incorrupt heart of St. John Vianney at St. John's Parish in Westminster, Maryland. As I entered the church, the interior was stunningly beautiful, the ancient chords of Gregorian chant gently entered my ears and the scent of a combination of clean, crisp chrism oil and incense wafted through the air. In the center of the altar was a beautiful gold reliquary with the incorrupt heart of the beloved saint. My senses were awed and delighted, and I paused, taking a deep breath, contemplating the scene

before me. Immediately, I recalled the description of the famous writer Matthew Kelly, that the Catholic Church is a slice of heaven on earth!

One of the many beautiful aspects of the Catholic Church is that it feeds our physical senses. The Church in her wisdom understands that we are made of both body and spirit and that both must be fed. This conveys meaning of the definition of sacrament as "an outward sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace." The sacraments feed our physical senses while at the same

time they enrich our souls with divine graces.

Growing up, I remember my father telling me that Catholic Churches smell distinctly 'Catholic'. I used to think that was an odd and humorous statement but it's actually true. One time during the 1970's, dad walked into a church in Germany with a coworker. The coworker saw Stations of the Cross on the walls and a tabernacle in the center of the altar. He felt sure it was a Catholic church and said that they should

check the Mass times. My father said, "No. It's not a Catholic Church. It doesn't smell Catholic." His coworker thought he was crazy. Turned out my father was right – it was an Anglican church. Over time, the perfume of the incense gets into the walls and can be smelled coming through the parish doors, even when there is no thurible in sight. Although in recent times, some Protestant denominations have begun occasionally incorporating incense into their prayer services.

The use of incense is not something that the

Catholic Church invented. There are references to it dating back to ancient Greece, Assyria, and Babylon. The Old Testament specifically mentions the importance of burning incense (Exodus 30:1-10). The Lord even gives a specific holy recipe to Moses to be used at the altar of the Lord. Interestingly, he mentions the sweet spice of frankincense, which was also given by one of the kings at the birth of Jesus in the New Testament. Frankincense symbolizes holiness and righteousness, the hallmarks of Christ's priesthood. In the Gospel, Luke portrays the priestly

sacrifice of Zechariah at the temple in what typifies the use of the incense at Mass. It reads, "Now it happened that it was the turn of his section to serve, and he was exercising his priestly office before God, when it fell to him by lot, as the priestly custom was, to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense there" (Luke 1:8-10). Incense is also mentioned by St. John in the Book of Revelation as he writes about golden bowls full of incense before the lamb who was slain (Revelation 5:6-8). Later he also writes, "and the

smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God” (Revelation 8:3-4). The use of incense has a long history throughout the ages and is clearly scriptural.

The smoke serves great purposes. Incense is a symbol of holiness and purification. Interestingly, we now know that frankincense has both antiseptic and healing properties. And why shouldn't it? God only wants our good. It makes sense that incense can have physical benefits. The smoke is also an image or symbol of our prayers, praise, and supplications rising to God. The Psalmist says, “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice” (Ps. 141:2). When we see the smoke rising, it becomes an outward sign of spiritual realities because prayer sanctifies and purifies us. Incense also dispels demons. The instruction given by the angel Raphael to Tobias against the demon was, “take the heart and liver of the fish and lay a little of it on the burning incense. The reek will rise, the demon will smit and flee...” (Tobit 6:17-18). The smell of the incense therefore symbolizes the presence and the power of light over darkness. Christ, who is Light, radiates a fragrance of goodness and, as the evangelist says, “life that was the light of men: and light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it” (John 1:4).

In burning the incense, the church reminds believers of the great prayers of the wise Ben Sirach (39: 12-14): “Listen to me, O you holy sons (and daughters), and bud like a rose growing by a stream of water; send forth fragrance like frankincense and put forth blossoms like a lily. Scatter the fragrance and sing a hymn of praise; bless the Lord for all his works.”

The Catholic Church uses incense at some

of the liturgical celebrations such as Solemn Masses on Sundays and weekends. It's often used during the most significant liturgical times of the year, such as Christmas, Easter, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and other solemnities or Holy Days of obligation. Incense can be used at Funeral Masses for the dead. The Bishop uses incense during the Dedication of a Church. Incense is also used at Benediction services. Note that the use of incense is mostly at the discretion of the priest or principal celebrant at the liturgical celebration.

Terms to know are:

Censer/Thurible – a metal container that holds hot coals. It has a top with air vents and a long chain so that it can be carried. Incense is scooped out of the incense boat and sprinkled on the hot coals in the censer. When the incense is burned it makes smoke.

Incense - perfumed grains that are burned during special occasions

Incense boat – container that holds the incense

Thurifer – the person who carries the censer and incense boat



Congratulations
FR. LOU,
On your retirement

The Family Apostolate Inc. congratulates Fr. C. Lou Martin, on his retirement as pastor of Christ the King parish, Glen Burnie, MD. We believe you've had a fulfilling priestly ministry and wish you many blessings on your well deserved retirement. We also pray you have good health and peace of mind after many years of faithful service.

The FA Team!



Congratulations to Kate for qualifying as part of the "Furious Five" from Maryland to represent Team USA in Inzell, Germany, for the World Taekwon-Do Championships, April 24-28, 2019. May the Lord bless you and keep you always!

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Lent

is our springtime!

By an Anonymous Servant in Carmel

For many Catholics, whenever Lent is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is the idea of sacrificial commitment to “give up” a favorite food, beverage, or pastime. This may be accompanied by the sincere notion that our loving Lord will generously reward such a sacrifice with improved humanity, perhaps even contained in a body at least five pounds lighter.

However, this particular idea for a Lenten journey is relatively basic and does not embody Christ's challenge found in Scripture in which He desires a change of heart more than a sacrifice. Father Mark Foley, in his book “A Season of Rebirth,” provides a more mature and complete vision for our journey: “Lent, derived from the old English word lencten, meaning spring. Lent is a time of rebirth; it is a season to allow God's seed to germinate within us, a time to do those things necessary to break out of our self-centered, encapsulated lives into a new and more expansive life of love in Christ.”

A beautiful metaphor frequently appearing

in Psalms and other spiritual writings compares the soul thirsting for God to “a dry weary land without water” (Psalm 63.1). Can you picture a drought-laden land so common in arid geographical areas? Without water, the land becomes hardened like concrete, the river beds dry up, and eventually, the compressed earth cracks. So, too, in our spiritual lives, we require the blood and water from our Christ's crucified side, just as the material body needs blood and water to function and survive. Our spirits can show the effects of drought when, by our veritable human nature's weaknesses, we stray from God, our life source. We become hardened and compressed like the earth as we drain into ourselves, and we eventually crack, being without grace. Consequently, all the ordinary fruits of a healthy condition become defunct. We no longer can be the hands and feet of Christ in the world as our discipleship and good works dry up.

Robert Frost once said, “The best way out is through.” And in our case, to climb out of spiritual dryness, the “through” is through Christ who is pure love, and, like water, the

sustenance of our souls. That's why the Church, in understanding our human frailty, provides relief through the liturgical season of Lent which calls us to adjust our focus out of and away from ourselves. Additionally, Jesus gave us the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist for rebirth and sustenance.

In all of its aspects, our faith is permeated with hope. In her poem “Creature of God,” the esteemed Carmelite poet Jessica Powers states:

“God likes me covered with my creaturehood and with my limits spread across his face.

*He lives to see me lifting to his eyes
Even the wretchedness that dropped his grace.*

“So to avoid spiritual drought with its resultant effects, we must keep our eyes on the prize – Christ who is pure love, for only where there is love can there be life and absolute fullness.”

Poem

"The Beauty of All Beauties"

In the quietness of the night I hear the voice of God.
Things for me to hear again, and some to share.
One time He spoke of prayer.
To always pray from the heart
and to watch your heart grow with love.
Another time God spoke of different places and said
'Go, meet more of My children and learn
what love is and how to use it,
grow in Me.'
Remember love needs to be shared.
I am thinking of the love that is truly
the Beauty of all beauties.
There was a book written of this love
and more people need to read.
So, I just need a few words to write
and praying you see as I saw,
the pain I and all caused.
The man suffering for our sins.
The love God gave to all.
All you need to receive this love
is to accept and unite the Child and the Man
and accept the gifts of Love.
If you have trouble looking at the suffering Man,
the pain we caused, change.
Then you will see and believe in the:
Beauty of All Beauties, Christ Crucified!

By Jenny Morzira

The 5 Love Languages

by Gary Chapman

Book Reviewer: Christine Sybert

*A man leaves his father and mother and
clings to his wife, and the two of them
become one body.*
Gen 2:24

The Bible says that marriage is about
unity... a husband and wife become one.
In reality, it is not always easy to do! We
each have our own will and our own
personalities. How do we successfully
"become one" with our spouse? Gary
Chapman presents a unique perspective on

this challenge in his book, "The Five Love
Languages." He suggests that couples
learn how to express love to each other in
ways that they can each appreciate.

Chapman's first challenge to couples uses
the concept of an emotional "love tank,"
which is a combination of a gas tank in a
car with an account in a bank. If it's empty,
you can't go anywhere or do anything. He
states that the same concept applies to
relationships. If we are not making deposits
into that emotional tank, it
will be bled dry by our
mistakes and blunders...
and then trouble really
begins.

How do we make deposits
into the emotional tanks
of our spouses? We
take the time to learn
their love language
and then express
love in a way that
THEY appreciate.
The challenge is
that our spouse's
love language is
different from
ours, and

so our actions are not appreciated the way
we had expected. Husbands, have you
ever bought flowers for your wife, just to
have her say, "Why did you spend money
on those? I would have preferred a dinner
alone with you - no kids - even if it's just at
McDonald's." What happened? Why did
she not appreciate the flowers? You are
speaking different love languages! Yours is
Gifts, while hers is Quality Time. Those are
two of the love languages; the other three
are Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service,
and Physical Touch. So that you can really
put this to work, tests to determine how you
and your spouse best receive love, plus
additional resources, are included within
the pages of the book.

The beauty of this concept is that it can
apply to other relationships, even those
between parents and children. Mr.
Chapman has written numerous corollary
books to this topic, including one called,
"The Five Love Languages of Children." So,
even if you have been happily married for
50 years (or more), you can still learn
something from this book that can help you
in all your close relationships.

*Dr. Sybert is a Clinical Pharmacist who
practices at St. Agnes Hospital. She is a
member of the Baltimore Guild of the
Catholic Medical Association and
has a special interest in bioethics.
She lives in the Baltimore
suburbs with her husband and
four teen and pre-teen children.*



Bible Quiz

The Gospel of John - Chapter 19

The Passion and Death of our Lord

- After being flogged, Jesus was crowned with thorns and dressed in a purple cloak for humiliation. He was then mocked, "Hail. King of the Jews!" and repeatedly hit. Who did this? Jn 19:2**
 - Pontius Pilate
 - The soldiers
 - The chief priests
 - Caiaphas
- The Jews wanted Jesus crucified but Pontius Pilate said, "I find no guilt in him." The Jews responded, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die ..." What law were they accusing Jesus of breaking? Jn 19:7**
 - The temple law
 - Claiming to be God
 - The sabbath law
 - Claiming to be greater than Caesar
- During the trial, Pilate was afraid and spoke to Jesus asking him, "Where are you from?" but Jesus remained silent. So Pilate questioned, "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?" How did Jesus respond? Jn 19:8-11**
 - He remained silent
 - He read Pilate's thoughts
 - He asked Pilate to release him
 - He told Pilate that his power had been given him [Pilate] from above
- What day did the trial of Jesus take place? Jn 19:14**
 - Yom Kippur
 - Hanukkah
 - Preparation day for the Passover
 - The sabbath day
- Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion. They crucified Him in a place called "the place of the skull." What does that word mean in Hebrew? Jn 19:17**
 - Sheol
 - Golan Heights
 - Damascus
 - Golgotha
- The letters "INRI" are initials for the Latin title that Pontius Pilate had written over the head of Jesus on the cross. It was also written in Hebrew and Greek. What do the letters stand for? Jn 19:19-20**
 - Jesus the Nazorean, the Messiah of the Jews
 - Jesus the Nazorean, the Criminal
 - Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews
 - Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the People
- There were 3 women at the foot of the cross. Who were they? Jn 19:25**
 - His mother, Anne, Veronica
 - His mother, Mary Clopas, Mary Magdala
 - His mother, Veronica, Mary Magdala
 - His mother, Claudia, Mary Magdala
- Jesus gave us everything, even his own mother when he said to her, "Woman, behold your son." Then turning to John, the beloved disciple, he said, "Behold, your mother." What did John do for Mary after that? Jn 19:26-27**
 - He kept her with the rest of the apostles
 - He took her into his home
 - He found a home for her at the temple
 - He asked Mary Magdalene to care for her
- Pilate ordered the legs of the criminals to be broken but Jesus was already dead, so a soldier thrust a lance into His side. What scripture passage did this fulfil? Jn 19:37**
 - This is my beloved son
 - They will look upon him whom they have pierced
 - You are the Son of God
 - I am the way, the truth and the life
- Who asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus from the cross? Jn 19:38**
 - John
 - Peter
 - Nicodemus
 - Joseph of Arimathea



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