

faithhelps



A Learning Companion to FAITH Magazine

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By Paulette Burgess

Vol. 2, Issue 8.1

Discussion: Does prayer really heal?

How powerful is prayer? If a sick person has friends and family praying for a recovery, will he or she be cured in a way different than someone who has no prayers offered?

If you answer Yes - Is that fair? Does that mean God only cures those who have people to pray for them? (Skeptics think if a person knows he or she is being prayed for there will be a positive psychological response which may bring about healing)

If you answer No - Why bother to pray? If God chooses to cure everyone equally why should we spend time in prayer at all? (What if a sick person isn't aware of prayers offered and there is a recovery. Was it because of prayer? What if there was no recovery?)

Read: Catechism of the Catholic Church: 307, 2633, 2741

For your eyes only: Ask yourself these questions

- 1 If you had a magic pill that would allow you to live your whole life totally free of any physical, mental or emotional pain would you take it?
 - 2 What kind of person would that make you?
 - 3 Do you think you could feel sympathy and compassion for others?
- The saying goes, "Pain and suffering builds character."**

*The wind to the rain said,
"You push and I'll pelt."*

*They so smote the garden bed
That the flowers actually knelt,
And lay lodged – though not dead.
I know how the flowers felt.*

- Robert Frost

know how the flowers felt. You can relate to that sense of being pushed by grief or pelted by pain. You felt crushed, beat down – not dead, but barely holding on to that spark of life.

Doctors, psychiatrists, family and friends will offer you a myriad of healing and helpful suggestions for your physical recovery. But many times the cure we really need is spiritual more than physical. Being at peace even in sickness shows spiritual health.

How does one begin the healing process? Dig out that old bag of tricks. The one you were given way back at the Sacrament of Confirmation. Remember when the bishop talked about those 7 precious gifts from the Holy Spirit? Those are the tools you need to get back on the road to recovery or acceptance: Strength, Wisdom, Courage, Knowledge, Right Judgment, Wonder and Awe and Reverence. Maybe you haven't used them much – so dust them off and put them to work. You'll find them to be powerful medicine.

Lesson: The healing process

If you have ever experienced a painful illness, accident or suffered through a time of depression or mental anxiety you



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the value of suffering and how prayer heals

Activity:

How others deal with suffering

Sometimes personal pain and suffering can "lock you in a box," making it seem as if you are the only person who is living such a life.

1 Go to the parish or public library or get on-line (www.catholicsaints.com) to read about the fascinating life stories of the holy ones – the saints. Many of these saints had sad, lonely and even tortured lives.

2 Discover how the saints dealt with their adversities.

- Was it through prayer?
- Fasting?
- Did they perform the corporal works of mercy, helping others rather than dwelling on their own infirmities?

Perhaps the saints were onto something. Their lessons may help lift your spirits enough to see the light- or life- at the end of the tunnel.

Suggested reading: St. Agnes, St. Stephen, St. Rita of Cascia, St. Bernadette

3 Consider praying for those who are sick at your parish.

- When was the last time you prayed for someone who is sick?
- Do you know anyone who is sick that you could visit?

Maybe your prayer will turn to compassion and you will be motivated to act: visit a nursing home, hospital or homebound neighbor. Your presence may be the answer to someone else's prayer and give you a new perspective on how to deal with suffering in your own life.

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By Fr. Bill Ashbaugh
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Spiritual Exercise: what good is there in suffering?

How could God be loving if He allows suffering?

Suffering is a part of our lives. I had a grandmother who said she was never sick a day in her life and never experienced a headache. She told me her secret was to eat a lot of Jell-O®. The same grandmother had to cope with the death loved ones and was bedridden for many years, but never complained. Even though she could barely swallow, she always wanted to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. And she did – all the way to her death that occurred on her birthday.

Grandma was one of the most peaceful and joyful persons I have known to the very end. She knew about a great mystery which many people never come to know ... that is ... suffering can be redemptive. Suffering is a part of all our lives and it was a part of our Lord's life. Suffering can bring people closer to God and one another, but it also can have the opposite effect. Sometimes people lose faith.

People tend to think of suffering is nothing more than a bad experience. It is not good in itself, but our Lord, by embracing the suffering in His life, has made suffering redemptive.

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come and be God's suffering servant. "He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity ... Yet it was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured ... But He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, upon Him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:3-5)

Our Lord saw His own suffering and death as central to His mission. " ... unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit ... I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour." (John 12:24, 27)

How does Jesus' suffering impact me today?

Jesus saved us not by His great and awesome miracles when He had all the crowds behind Him, but at His weakest moment. He saved us when He suffered and died on the cross.

Our suffering, then, can be holy and good because it will help us be like Jesus if we accept it. Does that mean we should not pray for our own healing, or the healing of others? No! Jesus healed many, and His healing power continues to be exercised in the Church through the sacrament of the sick and through gifts of healing that people have or pray for on behalf of others. I have been very blessed in my life to witness people being healed through the power of prayer. Such healing

has brought many people to a deeper faith and trust in God. The bottom line of it all is that God is sovereign. We pray for healing, but we also pray like Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemani: " ... still, not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) – Fr. Bill Ashbaugh is pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Howell



spiritual exercise 1

First, get in touch with a time in your life when you encountered suffering.

- **Maybe it was some suffering you went through personally, or a suffering you witnessed.** Ask Jesus to be with you as you think about this time of suffering. Jesus is always with us during those times. Before you conclude your meditation and thought, turn your attention to Jesus on the cross, or another part of His life when He suffered.
- **Maybe the suffering you are going through is more emotional.** Think of Jesus' suffering in the garden where His sweat became like drops of blood.

- **Maybe your suffering is one of rejection.** Think of Jesus being rejected by His own townsfolk at Nazareth when they even tried to kill Him, or by the chief priests and scribes who above all should have accepted Him because of their knowledge of Scripture.

spiritual exercise 2

The second exercise is to pray for healing. You can pray for your own healing if you are the one who is suffering, or pray for someone else. Pray this prayer for them:

Dear Jesus, you healed so many people who were afflicted and suffering. My Lord, I come to you like Jairus who pleaded for the life of his little girl, or the woman who believed she would be healed if she could touch just the tassel of your garment. I come to you in faith and believe firmly that you can heal (name the person or yourself here). I pray Lord that they (I) may receive whatever grace is needed in their lives to draw closer to you. Help us, Lord, to accept the grace of healing in whatever form it takes. Help us to believe firmly and to trust that you are here to help and save us. Look with mercy on those who are suffering Lord, and bring them your help. Amen.