



In the Two Hearts

Scattering the Seeds of Hope . . . in Suffering

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How Do You Bear Your Cross?

We all have to suffer in this life, it is a fact. No one can get around it. Try as we may to prevent things, we will all have some physical, emotional or spiritual trials to be confronted throughout our life journey. The challenge that Our Lord lays before us is “what will you do with that suffering”? There are two options that we have when suffering comes our way. The first is that we can let the suffering impact our world in a negative way, causing us to act out in anger, revenge, hatred or evil. The other is that we can take that pain and sorrow and do something positive with it, learn from it, offer it. Let’s take a look at each of these.

The first option is living “eyes inward.” When I suffer do I turn my eyes inward, focusing solely on my own pain, sorrow, hurt? As my eyes are focused inward do I stubbornly hold onto that pain and let it lead me into a downward spiral of anger, hatred, revenge, hopelessness or despair? When I am in pain do I take it out on others, punish others, hurt others, whether in my words or actions, whether I realize it or not? Do I focus solely on the negative letting it distort and skew my experiences throughout the day? Do I refuse to see the reality of situations by holding onto my own opinion; becoming hardened in it? Do I condemn others and justify myself so that I can feel better? Do I seek to escape from the suffering instead of trying to embrace it? In the end, do I blame God and turn away from Him, consciously and continually refusing His many invitations to come back and rest in Him?

The second option is living “eyes turned outward.” When suffering comes my way do I learn from it? Do I ask myself “what is the lesson in this”? With great courage do I cast my feelings aside, seeking to consider the blessings in my life and not dwell on the negative? Have I ever considered the possibility that this cross may be the

answer to one of my prayers, cloaked though it be, under a very distressing disguise? Do I realize that with every pain, whether spiritual, physical or emotional, that Our Lord is there with me, walking with me, guarding me, supporting me? Does the suffering make me cling to Him like never before, helping me realize that there is no security in this life but Him? Do I see in this suffering a great gift and opportunity from Our Lord to help others by offering it for individuals who are suffering, to bring relief to them in whatever way Our Lord desires? As I make this offering, do I make it in love and in faith, not simply because it is my “last resort,” but out of a desire, a *choice*, to help others in need of grace? Do I use this suffering as an opportunity to grow in abandonment, relinquishing my cares, needs, and life into the hands of Abba Father, trusting that in His time all will make sense? In the end, as I rest in His Heart, do I discover that He not only taught me how to deal with the sufferings of life, but that they were His greatest gift to me and that if I had the choice, I wouldn’t trade that gift for anything?



STORIES of Suffering

From Those

Whom We Have Met Along The Journey

AT THE ORDER, both in our ministry and in our everyday contacts, we have encountered individuals, both Catholic and non-Catholic, who have been through tragic experiences and have endured deep suffering. We have often been awed by their profound understanding and inner strength. We wanted to share what they have taught us, and so we asked some of them if they would be willing to write about their experiences. We asked them questions such as *What was the most difficult aspect of what you suffered? Has something good come from your suffering? Do you have thoughts or beliefs that you would call to mind to enable you to get through it?* They were told nothing of the theme of this newsletter, and were simply asked to answer honestly, without taking into account what they thought we might want to hear. Here are their answers...

“The intense heartache of witnessing someone you love die a little each day by self-inflicted choices is no less than catastrophic.”

Brandi, a wife and young mother fought desperately for years to keep her family intact in spite of her husband's addictions. That anguish was culminated in the tragedy of her husband's death. Here she shares her experience.

“SUFFERING . . .

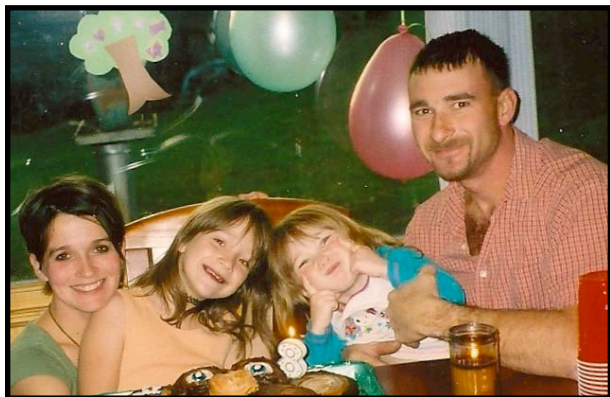
To express the depth of sorrow, helplessness and utter despair one feels when their life has been tainted by the merciless grasp and destruction of addiction is beyond what words are capable of expressing.

“I had spent the majority of my life loving a man who had struggled with many personal demons. His heart was beautiful and precious. He longed for wholeness, but was unable to take the necessary steps to attain it. He was a lost soul. I loved him unconditionally in the only way I knew. With every ounce of my human strength, I held on ever so tightly to hope. Hope for healing, hope that my husband would be "set free," hope that our family would be restored. I fought his battles . . . battles that were never mine to fight, never mine to conquer. I refused to give up on him, on us, on our family. I lived in constant fear . . . fear of the next crisis. I prayed for a miracle, I prayed for safety, I prayed for his brokenness, I prayed for guidance, I ceaselessly prayed. Prayer provided the oxygen that I needed to breathe.

“I often felt that I was on the verge of losing my mind; I felt that the intensity of the pain and defeat I felt was going to shatter my heart and soul, well beyond repair. It was at those extremely fragile times that I needed to remember that if God brought me to it, He would bring me through it . . . that He was beside and within me. It wasn't until I surrendered that I found strength. It wasn't until I completely gave my husband over to the Lord that I found peace in the midst of the storm. His life was not mine to live, his decisions were not mine to make. I was not capable of providing for him what only God could.

“Stepping aside and allowing him the freedom to reap the consequences of his choices was no doubt one of the most difficult things I have ever had to do.

“My husband ended his life in prison. He left behind two sweet daughters. I am comforted knowing God loves him far more than I can imagine and that death cannot separate eternal love. It has been in my darkest moments that God's love has brightly shined. When uncertain, He has guided my steps by His grace. He walks beside us throughout our journey of grief. His abundant love has been evident through the blessings of family and friends . . . for that I remain forever grateful.” **-Brandi**



Brandi and her husband with their two girls

“After I lost three children . . . I went downhill. I lost my faith in God, I hated everyone, I became a drinker of alcohol.”

This man has lost nearly every family member. His eldest daughter, Kathy, mentioned at the end of this article, was killed only a few years ago by a motorcyclist. It was only one week after she graduated college with a degree in nursing.



Michael and his nurse playing with a telephone

“MY NAME IS TOM. I am the proud father of four children that have been a part of my life. They are now deceased, and reside with our Lord Jesus, their true Father.

“The most difficult part for me in my experiences with the loss of my four children was with my son, Michael. Michael was my first son. He was the third child to be born. When he reached the age of seven, he became ill and was diagnosed with leukemia. It was devastating to me. I think every parent has their ‘pick of the litter,’ as they say, even though you love all your children just the same. But Michael was my pick. Michael was a strong little boy and loved life.

“Michael battled the disease with a courage I have never witnessed before. After eight months went by, back and forth to the hospitals for treatments, he became weak and went into a coma at the hospital. Michael was placed on life support machines to keep him alive. After 5 or 6 days went by the doctors called us in and informed me and Michael’s mother, that Michael was brain dead and there was no hope for him. They advised us that we should give them permission to disconnect the life support machines and let him die.

“I went home and prayed and prayed to God for an answer on what to do. The next day I decided not to give the permission to disconnect the life supports. The doctors tried again to convince me to let them disconnect Michael from the life support but I just couldn’t give up on my son. After three days went by, with no change to Michael’s health, a miracle happened! Michael started having brain activity and in one day’s time, came out of the coma with no adverse effects and no abnormalities. He still had the leukemia though. After a few more days of many tests that were performed, we took

Michael home and in five more months he was diagnosed as in remission of the cancer. After so, so many prayers to God I thanked Him with all my heart.

“Three more months went by and one day Michael was eating his breakfast with me; his eyes rolled back in his head and he collapsed and went into another coma. He was rushed to the hospital in Pittsburgh where he was once again placed on life support systems. Days passed by, as I prayed to God for another miracle for my son. The doctors once again came to us and informed us that Michael was brain dead and that there was no hope for him. I once again had to make a decision on whether to disconnect the life support that was keeping my son alive. How could I let my son die? The doctors and the priest at the hospital, along with my wife and family and friends, all agreed that it was the best thing to do, to let the doctors disconnect Michael from the machines. I prayed for an answer from God; could the doctors be wrong again, like the first time? I decided with great regret to let them disconnect Michael from the machines.

“I was by my son’s bedside when they unplugged the machine. Immediately after, a long continuously beep sound emitted from the machine and I watched my son Michael, as the life left his little body and the color left his eyes. I am crying now just remembering that moment he died, which I experienced twenty-two years ago, and still I ask myself ~ did I do the right thing, could it have been different?

After I lost three of my children, Michael being the third, I went down hill. I lost my faith in God, and I hated everyone. I became a drinker of alcohol. I contemplated suicide many times. As my first child, my daughter Kathy, grew older, we became very, very close. She helped me see that life is short and that other people still needed me in their life. I have become closer in my faith with God, and believe it is His will that I share my remaining life, trying to be a good man to my loving wife and good friends. I have realized no matter how bad off you think you are, there is always someone else even worse off, that could use your help, concern, or just someone to share a laugh with and listen to their problems.” **-Tom**

Dear Friends,

Please remember the Order not only in your prayers, but also financially as well.

As an Order, Our Lord has called us to focus totally upon Him and to rely upon Him to provide for all our needs. Please prayerfully consider whether Our Lord and Our Lady may be inviting you to help us continue in our mission for souls through a life centered upon contemplation, adoration and works of mercy.

Thank you and know that you remain in our prayers daily.

“In those darkest hours, seeing my son laid in the ground, I was so thankful that he believed in the Lord and that his soul would go to heaven . . . that the angels lifted him from that wreck . . . and brought him home.”



Nancy's son in front of his truck. Iraqi children learned to recognize his truck because he would throw to them the food he collected for them from fellow soldiers.

This is from a woman who lost her mother when she was a child, was then abused by her stepmother and finally given away by her father. Here she shares what it was like to lose her twenty-one year old son, just one week after he returned home on leave from Iraq, when he threw himself over his fiancée to protect her in a car collision that claimed both their lives.

“I used to think the hardest thing that I had ever went through, was being abused by my stepmother when I was a child. That changed when I lost my son.

“Losing my son was so devastating for me because he had been gone from the United States for almost a year to serve in the Army. When he returned we had only a few days together before the accident. As I thought about what happened, I couldn’t believe I would never see him again, hear his voice or share a holiday with him. I felt like I too was no longer alive. Even though I had faith and believed in God I could not find comfort anywhere. My child was gone.

“The first year after losing my son I was still numb, but the second year it all hit me so hard. It was like it had happened all over again. I leaned on my family and friends for support, but I had not taken it to God. I couldn’t pray.

“I began feeling that my son was urging me to go on; he did not want me to stay in the pit of despair that I had made for myself. He spoke to me in my dreams telling me that he was with God now, and that he loved me and that all I had to do was talk to the Lord and He would help me, that He was right there with me every step of the way. At some point I began talking to strangers that, through divine providence, God placed in my life. I found that helping others who had just lost a loved one was a way that I could move on. I encouraged those who I came in contact with, that it would get better. Of course they would never forget their loved one, but the pain would ease

as they, too, helped someone else. My helping others has in turn helped me. That was God’s simple little lesson for me. He took my hurt and pain and wrapped me in His love so that I could survive this terrible loss and fulfill His plan for my life.

“When I lost my son, it was God who, through his own Son’s suffering, took my pain on himself and lifted my heart and soul. In those darkest hours, seeing my son laid in the ground, I was so thankful that he believed in the Lord and that his soul would go to heaven and I am sure that when he called out to our Lord, that the angels lifted him from that wreck and cradled him in their arms and brought him home.” -Nancy

The Mother and The Son

*In agony She waits below,
the instrument of death.
Standing vigil with Her Son,
shrouded in darkness.*

*In the silence Her Heart beats,
to the beat of His.
Every breath He takes, She takes,
each one He gives, She gives.*

*Mocking, curses, rocks and dirt,
are cast upon Her Lord.
Loving support She issues forth,
while deeper runs the sword.*

*His body quakes under the weight,
of man’s sin and shame.
Her heart does break under the weight,
of seeing Him take the blame.*



*All His strength disintegrates,
His Spirit is released.
Death comes to both, not just one,
yet Her sufferings increase.*

*She’s pierced not once, but many times,
the spear is wrenched about.
Not just flesh but soul it alters,
as no complaints come out.*

*O Mother pierced thru and thru,
my heart to Yours I press.
To console and to love You,
here, rest upon my breast.*

*In Your lap the Victims laid,
everything becomes numb.
You close His eyes and kiss His face,
His sacrifice is done.*