

IMPRINT

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He makes all things *new*.

GOD'S MERCY IS *Creative*

God's mercy is creative.

There are times when all seems lost or beyond hope and then God surprises us through an unexpected turn of events and something new is brought to life.

There is nothing you can do that will ever make God stop loving you, and there is nothing that He cannot heal and make new. J.R.R. Tolkien illustrates this idea in the *Silmarillion*, where the God-figure, Iluvatar, creates the universe through a magnificent swirling of angelic harmonies. When one of the most powerful angels, in rebellion, introduces a discordant note, Iluvatar does not turn his back on the angel or abandon his creation, but rather responds by using that discordant note to create a new, more beautifully intricate melody. With the discordant note now woven seamlessly into the music, God's marvelous creation of the world emerges.

Reflecting on the Scripture passage of the feeding of the five thousand, Cardinal O'Connor would marvel that after all had been miraculously satisfied with five loaves and two fish -- Jesus then directs the Apostles to "pick up the pieces lest they be lost." The Cardinal would say: "God can't stand seeing anything lost." He loves us too much to let our mistakes be the final word.

It's a sure thing: Adam and Eve "messed up", and we've suffered the consequences ever since. But instead of just starting the whole thing over, or simply restoring us to our original innocence in the Garden of Eden, God came in the flesh to pick up the pieces. He raised us, in Christ, higher than the angels, to be sharers in the communion of the Blessed Trinity Himself. The biggest "mistake" of all - the crucifixion of Jesus Christ -- ended up in His Resurrection and our Redemption. With this same LOVE God now desires to make all things new where there is sin and sorrow in our lives.

In Christ our Life,



*Mother Agnes Mary
for all the Sisters of Life*

Claiming Redemption in every part of our lives.

by Sister Mariae Agnus Dei, SV

Few things wrap us in glory as the natural world. Each morning, night is scattered by the rising sun and fills the earth with promise of a new beginning. Every evening this sun sets, often in a beautiful collision of reds, oranges, and purples capable of quieting the day's toil; the moon gleams amidst the evening sky, amethyst blue. And as night falls, these shades of piercing blue give way to deep ebony, enhancing the radiance of countless stars, and the hope of all who gaze upon them. Rainforests teem with life, while ocean waves crash faithfully on quiet sands etching blue waters, carving within the soul new love and vigor. And the American Elm stands tall, awakening one's own strength and resilience, as it stretches its great limbs towards the sky in an unflagging, three hundred year reach towards heaven. And yet, though nature is full of promise and beauty, it is, like all life, vulnerable to loss, death, and destruction.

Fire quickly rages to desolate whole forests. Without warning, volcanoes erupt, unleashing searing lava flows and billows of ash, rendering surrounding landscapes lifeless. The brilliant flowers of summer fade, succumb to the frosts of fall, and are quickly buried beneath blankets of wintry snows. Far above us, galaxies stretch and distort with great intensity as they collide. And a spider's meticulous labor to spin a web is all too easily destroyed by the unknowing passerby.

But what has the final word? Life? Death? Which is stronger? Is it the promise of glory, or the ruin of the broken pieces?

Tenacious capacity to recover. Fire ecology has revealed, forth from the ashes of a forest fire, many habitats become more vital, healthy, and give life to species that otherwise could not have flourished. The eruption of Mt. Saint Helen's triggered the largest landslide in recorded history, toppling 4 billion board feet of timber and landscape for 230 square miles, and sending 520 million tons of ash into the air darkening skies 250 miles away. The area was entirely devastated. And yet thirty-five years later life has returned.

And though the old scenery has passed, a new landscape and ecosystem has emerged, witnessing to the tenacious capacity of life to recover even after disaster. Though flowers die beneath the snows of winter, their life has not ended. The little seeds they carried with them silently find their way into the earth, only to burst into new life come springtime. Even astronomers can testify to the new life that comes as a result of the intense interaction of galaxies when they merge. Stellar nurseries are born, and with them the next generation of stars. And even though a web is broken, the spider is not deterred. For the great Architect that designed the spider gave it the ability to repair the broken threads.

God can't stand to see anything lost. And as deeply as the Divine Architect inscribed the story of redemption in nature, so too, He inscribed it all the more intimately in us. God gave us His very Self – Jesus. Through His passion, death and resurrection, we gain the ability to claim redemption in every event of our lives.

Just like in the natural world, circumstances can often cause us to feel helpless as we gaze at the broken pieces of our lives. And yet, if we lift our eyes, look to our Redeemer, and give Him permission, we will discover that with Christ – death, darkness, and loss never have the final word.

Bursting forth with new life in Him. When our lives are challenged to rise forth from the ashes – we can cling with confidence to the possibilities of the life-giving power of Christ's resurrection. When pain and affliction erupt into our lives and threaten our every sense of security and wellbeing – we can let Love go to work redeeming every place with His infinite and inexhaustible mercy. When death touches us through sin and illness – we can lay its every sting to rest in the tomb with Our Redeemer, and wait for it to burst forth into new life with Him. When the unexpected breaks our lives into pieces and clouds our every hope – we can choose to abide in Jesus Christ – the Savior who is with us, and whose Sacred Heart beats within us as much as our very own, trusting, He will make all things new.



by Sister Mary Margaret Hope, SV

Katherine

Changed forever

In God's wisdom, there is an order for the important milestones in life. But sometimes, life doesn't go according to plan. We make mistakes and muddle things up. Fortunately for us, God enters into our chaos, meets us where we are, and brings about a beautiful 'new order,' according to His merciful plan.

When Katherine was a baby, her mother wanted to have her baptized. But with the busyness of being a single mom and an immigrant working to provide for family back home, somehow it never happened. Katherine attended catechism classes as a child off and on but never finished. Then, when she was a sophomore in high school, Katherine discovered that she was pregnant. The school nurse and psychologist counseled her to have an abortion. They told her: "This is not the right time. You are too young; you will never finish school. If you have this baby, your life is going to change." The counselor even made an appointment for her at an abortion clinic. But Katherine knew that abortion was not what she wanted.



As it turned out, the school counselors were wrong about a lot of things. When Katherine told her mother, she was shocked and sad but supportive. Katherine stayed in school until the week before she gave birth and was back a week later to finish her exams. She finished the 10th grade with a 97% average, graduated high school in June, and is beginning college this fall. Her daughter Katie is a bright little toddler now two years old. But the school counselor was right about one thing: her life was going to change.

During her pregnancy, Katherine had contacted our Sisters at the Visitation Mission for support. She knew she wanted things to be different for her daughter and asked for help making arrangements for Katie to be baptized. She remembers sitting around the table at the convent celebrating Katie's baptism when Sr. Michela asked her: "And what about you? When are you getting baptized?" Katherine recalls: "I always wanted to be baptized but I thought it was too late for me." She was then 15 years old.

A gloriously disordered crowd gathered around the Baptismal font: Sisters, families, friends, and fifteen women, children and infants dressed in a wide assortment of white garments. Bishop O'Hara, auxiliary bishop for New York, was unfazed by the unusual circumstances...And the Sisters were overjoyed.

Katherine, Xiomara, and Yoanny preparing to be confirmed.



We have seen a growing desire to encounter God among many of the mothers we serve. The gift of their children, though unexpected, has led these mothers to a spiritual awakening, a new relationship with Christ, and to a longing to raise their children within the family of the Church.

Yoanny, another mom whom we served in the Visitation Mission, had teenage children, but a crisis pregnancy in her mid 30's inspired her to reconnect with God. She said: "I knew God existed, but we didn't have a relationship." Her friend Xiomara supported her in the pregnancy when no one else did. In the process both of them began to rediscover their faith. Neither Yoanny nor Xiomara had been Confirmed and both wanted to be fully initiated into the Church.

But there was a problem. With all of the preoccupations of being a single parent, it would be impossible for these women to attend a typical parish RCIA program. Realizing this, we created a program specially tailored to allow the mothers we serve and their children to receive the Sacraments. The location and content of the program was customized to their particular life experiences and needs. Several of our Co-Workers of Life volunteered to provide babysitting during the class, and Sisters were there to accompany them and provide extra support.

To get a picture of a typical RCIA class, imagine Sisters and volunteers chasing energetic preschoolers around a gym while inside the classroom, catechumens ranging in age from 10 to their mid-40s listened attentively.

Katherine soaked up the teachings of the Church like a sponge. Recalling the class she says: "I wanted to learn about God, the Bible, Jesus. I knew something about them, but I didn't know if they were real or not. I'll never forget in class studying a painting of Jesus standing at the door knocking. I raised my hand to explain what I thought it meant – that Jesus never forces his way into our lives. He knocks because it is an invitation; it's our decision."

When the great "Sacrament Day" finally arrived, the anticipation was palpable. After their preparatory weekend retreat, Yoanny said: "I feel closer to the Lord than ever in my life." Xiomara, who was to serve as godmother for the child she helped to save as well as being Confirmed herself, told us: "I am so excited that I feel butterflies in my stomach."

[cont'd on next page]

[Bishop O'Hara with Katherine's two little sisters who were also baptized.]



LITANY OF TRUST ►

- written by Sr. Faustina Maria Pia, S.V.

Last year, in the midst of a struggle, I heard the Lord say one word to me over and over again. Trust. Trust. Trust. It was on repeat. This litany is a fruit of that prayer, because I realized that trust is what opens my heart to receive His merciful love – so I want it all the more. I named the areas in which I am challenged to trust as well as those that are in the hearts of us all, that with each line His love would be more powerfully received in hearts around the world. And His love sees every struggle through.



A gloriously disordered crowd gathered around the baptismal font: Sisters, families, friends, and 15 women, children and infants dressed in a wide assortment of white garments.

Along with the children of the moms in the class, Katherine and another young mother, Shaylin, had brought their little brothers and sisters to be baptized. Bishop O'Hara, auxiliary bishop for New York, was unfazed and guided everyone smoothly through the liturgy. The cleansing waters of Baptism were poured over each head, big and small. The four and seven year olds were grinning from ear to ear as they presented themselves at the font. Shaylin's ten year old little sister glided down the aisle like a princess to receive her first holy communion, although she had to be held back from running up to be confirmed as well.



As the last strains of the closing hymn faded away, a hush fell on the congregation. "I could stay in the Church forever," said Yoanny. "The class changed my life. I am a different person now. My priorities are different and I am so much more at peace. I know Jesus is always by my side."

"My son felt so happy and at peace afterwards. He said it was the best moment of his life."

-Barbara

Andrew, the 13-year-old son of one of our moms, newly baptized and confirmed, was spellbound as he spoke to a seminarian who had served the Mass about how he too could be an altar server, and maybe one day a priest. The next day his mother Barbara thanked us profusely. She said: "My son felt so happy and at peace afterwards. He said it was the best moment of his life." Soon afterwards Andrew attended Camp Veritas, a Catholic summer camp, and put away his video games to start reading the Bible and praying the rosary. Months later he said: "It feels different—something inside my soul. I used to get bullied a lot at school, but Baptism makes me stand up for myself. God is much stronger than I thought. I can ignore the bullies because I know Jesus will protect me."



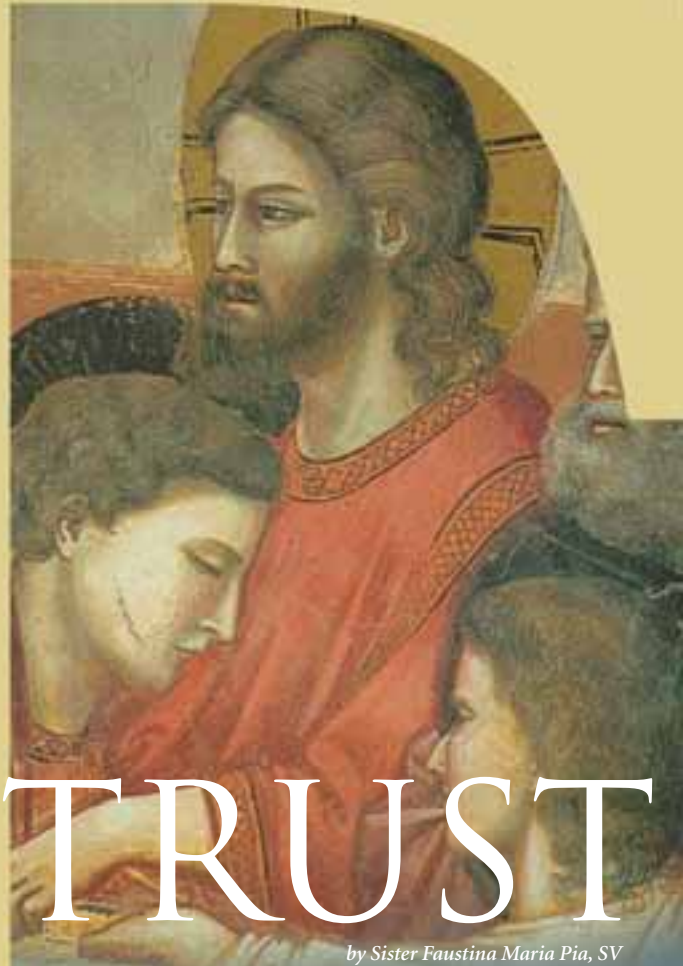
Katherine recounted recently how happy it makes her when her little sisters wake her up every Sunday morning because they are so excited to go to Mass. When she looks at her daughter Katie, she doesn't see the child that came at the 'wrong time.' She sees the child that opened the door to Jesus who was knocking at Katherine's heart. Remembering the moment when the Bishop poured the water over her forehead, she said: "I thought: That's it; my life is changed. You are a new Katherine, a new me. And I want to keep it that way."

Andrew, the son of one of our moms was newly baptized and confirmed.

*From the belief that
I have to earn Your love,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From the fear that I am unlovable,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From the false security
that I have what it takes,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From the fear that trusting You
will leave me more destitute,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From all suspicion of
Your words and promises,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From the rebellion against
childlike dependency on You,
Deliver me, Jesus.*

LITANY of TRUST

*From refusals and reluctances
in accepting Your Will,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From anxiety about the future,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From resentment, or
excessive preoccupation with the past,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From restless self-seeking
of the present moment,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From disbelief in Your love and presence
in the midst of suffering and trial,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From the fear of being asked
to give more than I have,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From the belief that my life
has no meaning or worth,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From the fear of what love demands,
Deliver me, Jesus.*
*From discouragement,
Deliver me, Jesus.*



by Sister Faustina Maria Pia, SV

*That You are continually holding me,
sustaining me, loving me, Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That Your love goes deeper than my sins and failings,
and transforms me, Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That not knowing what tomorrow brings is an
invitation to lean on You, Jesus, I trust in you.*
That you are with me in my suffering, Jesus, I trust in you.
*That my suffering, united to Your own, will bear
fruit in this life and the next, Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That You will not leave me orphan, that You are
present in Your Church, Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That Your plan is better than anything else,
Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That You always hear me and, in Your goodness,
always respond to me, Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That You provide the grace to forgive myself
and others, Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That You give me all the strength I need for
what is asked, Jesus, I trust in you.*
That my life is a gift, Jesus, I trust in you.
*That You will teach me to trust You,
Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That You are my Lord and my God,
Jesus, I trust in you.*
*That I am Your beloved one,
Jesus, I trust in you.*

Beautiful Blunders

Let's just say... God uses everything.

-by Sr. Marie Veritas, SV

Bloopers – we all have ‘em. *Whether it's a simple mistake at work, a misplaced word, a missed flight, or an awkward stumble, we all find ourselves in moments we wish could be reversed. The oddity of God's mercy is that He uses our mistakes, failures, sins, and even sufferings, to bring a greater good than if they hadn't happened at all. God writes straight with crooked lines.*



1 Falling into Grace

Sr. Mary didn't particularly want to go for a bike ride. It had never worked out yet, riding in long skirts and trying to balance and all. But the Sisters were asking for her, so she thought she'd give it one more shot. They were riding rather successfully along when they came to a speed bump and a sharp turn she just couldn't make. "I can't make this turn!" she shouted. Panicking, trying to listen to the instruction of the Sister behind her, turning her head right as she turned the bike left, she smashed into a newly-planted hedge, catapulted over the handlebars, and flipped upside down onto the lawn in a flurry of blue and white. As she lay, the bicycle splayed on top of her with its wheel turning lazily, the hedge thoroughly destroyed, and the invisible cartoon birds chirping in a circle around her head, a woman emerged from the house in her bathrobe and slippers. Looking groggy and confused, with a strange expression on her face, she cried, "Oh, my gosh!" As she helped Sr. Mary up from the lawn, they got talking. Finally, after an excess of profuse apologies from the Sisters, the woman said, "Don't worry about it. I can get a new hedge. It is strange that you should be landing on my lawn, though." At that, she burst into tears, pouring out her heart to the Sisters. She shared that she was going through a hard divorce, and had become very depressed. By the end of the conversation, she was laughing. "God sent you," she said. Having Sr. Mary plough through her hedge and collapse on her lawn was for her, a sign of God's presence and a witness to hope.



Towed to Redemption

2

The car was gone. Sr. Veritas looked out at the street with a churning stomach. It was all her fault. After getting a ride to the tow pound, she stood somberly in line, handed the money to the lady at the window, and let herself be escorted through the drab hallways into the enormous tow pound yard, where rows of cars sat in the gloom. The whole thing was a glum affair. At least the woman who was driving her to her car was kind. “What sort of work do you do?” the woman asked. Sister told her. The woman grew silent when she heard about our Hope and Healing mission to women who have suffered after abortion. Finally, she said softly, “I helped my friend get an abortion.” Sister listened to her story, and then spoke with her about the tender love and mercy of Jesus, who is greater than any sin and deeper than our darkness. Deeply moved, the woman asked for more information. Sr. Veritas gave her a Divine Mercy Holy Card, a few brochures, and an invitation to come on a women’s retreat. After praying together and giving her a big hug, the woman parted with a smile and a wave. Sister, full of joy, drove to the tow pound exit, which streamed with sunlight. As she pulled up to the exit booth, she glanced down at her ticket. Stamped in bright red block letters, it read: REDEEMED.



Called by Name

3

Monsignor Vincent Foy, the legendary Canadian pro-life champion, had taken a fall. The Sisters visited him regularly for a few weeks as he lay in recovery in the ICU. One week, two novices went with Sr. Antoniana to visit Monsignor. Sister had become so used to the routine that she sailed past the nurse’s station to Monsignor’s room. Usually, he was alone, but this time, there was a distraught-looking couple with him. Monsignor had taken a turn for the worse. His broad frame was significantly diminished, he was on a ventilator, and wore a large oxygen mask that covered most of his face. Only his white hair remained recognizable. Sr. Antoniana went to his side and tenderly clasped his hand. “Monsignor Foy, the Sisters are here. We are praying for you. We have two

novices from New York here praying for you, too.” The couple seemed confused, but grateful. One of the nurses overheard and exclaimed, “That’s not Monsignor! That’s Loretta!” Sr. Antoniana froze. The woman motioned to the patient. “This is my mother!” Let’s just say, Sister wanted to sink into a hole. Trying to recover from her piercing embarrassment and calling on the Holy Spirit, she said, “This is not a mistake! God wanted us to be here. Would you like to pray?” With tears in their eyes, the couple leaned in to pray for a full restoration of Loretta’s health, to hear words of hope, and to receive miraculous medals. After praying, the husband began to laugh: “Yeah, I thought “Monsignor” was a term of endearment or a nickname you had given Loretta!” Later, upon hearing the whole ordeal, the real Monsignor Foy, who had been in low spirits, howled and howled with delight.

an interview with ARCHBISHOP FISHER



Archbishop Anthony Fisher, of Sydney, Australia *was struck down with Guillain Barré Syndrome, an immune-related condition, last Christmas. Symptoms include varying degrees of muscle weakness and with the Archbishop this also included temporary paralysis from the neck down. He is now on the long road to recovery.*

CAN *our* Vulnerability *make us* MORE *human?*

Q. Archbishop Fisher, you've recently been discharged from a four and a half month stay in the hospital, but hospitals and the healing professions aren't things you're unfamiliar with; you've contributed a lifetime of work to bioethics. How has your understanding of these issues been deepened or changed by your experience?"

I've had a lot of time to reflect on the importance of the body in our life and its vulnerability, its fragility, and the reliance we inevitably must have on others when we are frail or sick, and how we view that relationship. Is it humiliating to be dependent on others or is that actually part of what human relationships are about; what does that mean for the character of a sick person? I asked people to pray for patience, courage, and hope for me, so those were three virtues I sensed I would really need to develop while I was sick, and I hope I have cultivated those better during my sickness and been given some supernatural help with that too, so that I've jumped ahead more than just by my own efforts in those departments.

I think people often respond glibly to suffering, people of faith say things like 'This is giving you a share in the suffering of Christ', or 'It will pass', and 'Keep up a happy disposition', but there are many things people say which they hope will help and partly reflects that they feel helpless themselves, that they don't know what to say. But they probably don't help very much at the time, apart from that they communicate through those words, underneath those words, that

they are helpless like you are, and that they fear for you and they care about you. I hope that at the end of this my answers won't be quite so formulaic off-pat, simplistic as they might have been before.

Q. Many people experience a health crisis at some point in their lives, which can lead to feelings of vulnerability and dependence on others. What did you learn about these experiences in your recent illness?

I think there's no doubt that for the person who is used to being very independent and very able, it is humiliating when other people have to wipe your bottom for you, or help you shower, or feed you very basic things. I've been interested in recent years, a number of writers have, in moral philosophy and moral theology, been insisting on vulnerability and interdependence being at the very heart of what it is to be a human person, and to be a person in community, and in relationships. And that's not just babies and the very elderly, but lots of people in between. We will be dependent, we're all dependent in fact all the time on others to feed us; not literally to put the food on a spoon and put in our mouth, but to get the food to us, to grow it, to prepare it, to process it and all the rest. We are much more dependent than we actually realize or reflect upon day-to-day, but it becomes more obvious to us when things we're used to being independent, or relatively independent about, we suddenly can't do for ourselves anymore, then we realize 'Oh, I need others, I can't do this on my own.

This presents a very different starting point to the view of the human person as the totally autonomous agent who can do everything for themselves, who really doesn't need others much at all, or only relates to others on the basis of a choice to do so, because there's some mutual advantage in working with another person. Much of human life is just not like that, it's situations where we don't have much in the way of choices or they're very limited.

Q. To many people today suffering can seem pointless, useless, something to be avoided by any means, at any cost; but the sages and the saints have seen suffering a little differently haven't they?

We could point to lots of saints who've suffered in one way or another, and come out the other end of that a greater, more beautiful, more whole person, rather than coming out bitter, angry with God, or the world, or their fellows. And I think as Christians we admire that, and we wish that for ourselves. It's not that we wish suffering for ourselves, we're not masochists as Christians. But Christianity does mean that we meet the suffering when it comes differently to someone without faith. We know that Christ has gone there before us, and the great saints have accompanied Him and accompany us in our suffering, and that Christ has a power to relieve that suffering in some way, or to help us transcend that suffering in some way, to bring some meaning, to bring some new inner beauty out in us, to make us like, say, Mother Teresa. After that long dark period of doubt, and of spiritual dryness in her prayer, and of loneliness in her vocation, she came out the other end as someone the whole world could be inspired by, someone that even non-Christians can look at and say, "Wow, that is humanity at its best, at its greatest," and believers can say that is humanity at its holiest. I want some of that for myself - probably like most people, I'd rather have it without too much pain, thank you very much; I'd like the result, in terms of greater character without the process required to get there.

Q. St John Paul II was famous for teaching on suffering and showing his suffering to the world. How has your own illness affected the way you understand witness of John Paul II?

There are some very good reasons why people often try to hide their weakness. But John Paul II showed us that sometimes it is right for people to see the crucifixion; that sometimes the vulnerability of the human person and their continuing to struggle in faith and hope and love, like every human being does at one time or another through suffering, that it's good sometimes for people to see their leaders experience that and go through that just as they do, and to not sugar-coat it, not hide it or try various techniques that minimize it.

I think for John Paul it was especially dramatic because he had been so strong. He had been an athlete, he had been of tremendous physical and emotional and spiritual strength and so there must have been a real humbling for him: being cast down so low by his Parkinson's disease and by the other things he suffered that left him more and more incapacitated. I prayed to John Paul quite a lot in my own sickness, knowing firstly that unlike him I am expected to fully recover and to return to my full health, whereas he knew that he would gradually get worse and worse. And yet somehow he managed to maintain great hope and great dignity; to be more than ever an inspiration to people around the world in his very weakness, in his quite public sickness which he didn't hide from the world in those last years.



Q. What has your illness taught you about the value and worth and destiny of human life, both our shared life here now and our new life made possible by the Resurrection?

I was struck down with my sickness on the night of Christmas and because Easter was very early this year most of the time that I was sick was in Lent, in the Paschal time looking towards Easter and going there through the Passion. So I just happened to be sick at a liturgical time that gave me immediately things to reflect on. Such as, that God, in becoming a human being, allowed Himself as creator of the universe, the all-powerful one, to have the fragility of a baby so that as a newborn baby He couldn't do anything for Himself. When I found myself totally paralysed from the neck down I very much sensed I was there like the babe of Christmas at that same time; as powerless as Him. And then in the weeks that followed, when I gradually recovered a little of my strength but was quite disabled for quite some time, we found ourselves almost straight after Christmas going into Lent, reflecting on God on the Cross again with his hands and feet completely disabled and in tremendous pain.

As I went through my time of disability and pain, again I had a very strong sense that Christ had been there, was there with me, and that it's exactly His hands and feet which he would be showing to us after the Resurrection, now glorified. That's what he showed the Apostles first and foremost: 'have a look at my hands, have a look at my feet', still with the tattoos of His ordinary human life, of the suffering He had been through, but now gloriously enjoying new life, eternal life, transfigured life. So I kept asking Him in my prayer to share at the Resurrection of His hands and His feet, and I keep asking Him that in my prayer, that the new life He experienced after the Cross, particularly in his extremities, those limbs that were nailed, that I might experience something of that Resurrection even now in this life.

Q. How would you recommend for individuals who are suffering and those who are caring for those people to grow in the virtues of patience, hope and courage of which you spoke earlier?

Well, the first thing I did to try and grow in those virtues is say to myself, 'I can't pull myself up by my own shoelaces' - in fact I couldn't tie my shoelaces at that stage at all, and nearly six months later I still can't tie my own shoelaces - 'I need God's help if I'm going to have more patience, and more courage, and more hope,' so the first thing I said was, 'Everybody who loves me, everybody who cares for me, please pray for that for me,' as I was praying for that myself. I think these are supernatural gifts, first and foremost, as all the virtues are great graces when we find them within ourselves and realize 'I'm not the why of that', or 'I'm not the whole of the why of that,' I find in myself some reserves of character that I might never have guessed I had, or certainly didn't do the work to get them.

We could say that suffering is present in order to unleash love in the human person... The world of human suffering unceasingly calls for, so to speak, another world: the world of human love.

Saint John Paul II

I think then, like all virtues, we also have to practice them, and so there were times when my emotions, my physical feelings, my spiritual feelings at particular times might have inclined me to frustration, to anger, to impatience; to where I had to practice virtue, to resign myself to the fact that I will be weak for quite some time, and it will not help me or anyone else to rage against that. A certain contemplative acceptance of our lot is proper, I think, to the Christian soul. It doesn't mean, again, that we're masochists, or that we're lazy and do nothing about improving our lot - I threw myself wholeheartedly into the physiotherapy, the four or five hours in the gym every day. So having a certain proper resignation to one's lot is not the same as being lazy, or not doing your best to cooperate with grace, and with your own gifts and possibilities to make the situation better. But it does mean that in the meantime you can live, you can adopt a certain courageous, patient, hopeful acceptance of the situation, and even learn some things, even gain some things - harvest some fruit from that period, so that it's not just gritting your teeth and bearing it, but that actually there are some positives, some gains along the way.

Editor's Note: This is an abridged version of an interview conducted by Patrick Langrell. The full text may be found at: humanlifereview.com

Excerpts from Archbishop Fisher's 2016 Easter Homily

Today Life Reigns

Only a little more than a year after I became your pastor I was, as many of you know, struck down by a serious sickness called Guillain-Barre Syndrome. I was at one stage paralysed from the neck down in intensive care at St Vincent's Hospital. I am now gradually recovering and I hope I will have learned much about the logic of sickness and recovery, of evil and redemption that all of us will experience at one time or another. Many others, I know, suffer worse with little hope of things getting better for them. Some are much longer trapped in the hospital ward or the grave. Some are not yet able to join us singing Alleluias this morning. Yet so radical is the power of Easter that it does eventually break down the walls even of the tomb. Easter comes to the sick, the depressed, the lonely, and the deceased today and brings new life where it surely cannot be found. Life visits Death this morning and Life says: 'I shall be your death, O Death'. Today Life reigns in every hospital, in every broken heart, at every deathbed, and even every graveside.





Photos courtesy of Matthew Barrick

25 YEARS OF GOD'S GRACE



Cardinal Dolan along with many bishops and priests offered a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Patrick's Cathedral on June 1st, 2016 celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Life. After the Mass over one thousand people spilled out onto West 51st Street for a block party celebration in front of our Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent. There was music, games for the children and lots of time to catch up with old friends! The celebration fittingly concluded with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction.



ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE SISTERS OF LIFE



THE SISTERS OF LIFE
Annunciation Motherhouse
38 Montebello Road
Suffern, NY 10901

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