


# Ad Veritatem

Volume 14 Issue 8

St. Thomas More Society of Orange County

AUGUST 2009

A detailed portrait of Thomas More, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a dark cap, a thick brown fur collar, and a red robe. A gold chain with a large rose pendant is around his neck. He is looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. The background is a green draped cloth.

*"The fickleness of fortune,  
the shortness of life, and the  
prevalence of suffering all show  
that life itself is but a journey  
towards death."*

Thomas More: Portrait of Courage

## AUGUST MEETING:

**WEDNESDAY AUGUST 19, 2009 NOON**

**SPEAKERS: APOLOGIST TIM STAPLES**

**TOPIC: "THE EUCHARIST"**

*DETAILS ON PAGE 3*

"Ad Veritatem" is Latin for "Toward the truth."



## WHO WE ARE

In 1966, the movie *A Man For All Seasons* inspired the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to recognize this film as the Picture of the Year. This was one of the few occasions in the history of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences where the life of a religious figure won the hearts of the motion picture industry's elite. The central figure portrayed in *Man For All Seasons* was, of course, St. Thomas More, the great lawyer, statesman, apologist, husband, father and faithful Catholic. In 2000, St. Thomas was honored as the Lawyer of the Millennium by a secular panel of historians for the British Commonwealth. Shortly thereafter, John Paul II declared St. Thomas as the Patron Saint of Statesmen.

Inspired by a homily given by Bishop Norman McFarland at the 1995 Red Mass of Orange County, five "fearless" members of the Orange County bar met shortly thereafter at the law offices of Rutan and Tucker in Costa Mesa. These lawyers all shared the realization that the legal practice takes a severe toll on the personal and spiritual lives of those involved in it and that many in the legal profession had become too focused on the material life with the natural consequence being the de-emphasis on their spiritual life. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the formation of a new organization for lawyers and judges in the County of Orange with its mission being to publicly support and encourage the spiritual development of its members in their Catholic faith. The group chose as its patron St. Thomas More, the greatest lawyer of his time, who was a dedicated husband and father with a deep and profound commitment to his Catholic faith, his profession and his fellow man. Thus the St. Thomas More Society of Orange County was born.

Attendance at the monthly meetings in the early years was sporadic. Our spiritual director, Fr Hugh Barbour, wisely advised us not to worry about numbers because it was more important "to be than to do or say." He encouraged the virtues of patience and perseverance. His sage advice, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and St. Thomas More, has led us to our current level of a fourteen member Board of Directors of lawyers and judges and a mailing list for the monthly newsletter of over 970.

The goal of the Society is to inspire and lift up the minds and hearts of the legal community of Orange County to follow the example of St. Thomas More by integrating God in every aspect of their professional and personal lives. The Society seeks to accomplish this goal through inspirational speakers at monthly meetings, this newsletter, the Red Mass, a website, an annual spiritual retreat and other events. The St. Thomas More Society also seeks to provide a haven where those who are committed to their Catholic faith as well as those who are seeking to learn more about the Church, can find fellowship and encouragement in the face of overwhelming media and cultural forces working against that pursuit.

***St. Thomas More, please pray for us. †***

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*St. Michael's Abbey*



**AUGUST**  
**MEETING**

**APOLOGIST TIM STAPLES**  
**Part 3: "THE EUCHARIST"**

**WHEN:**  
**NOON**  
**Wed. August 19**

**WHERE:**  
**First American**  
**Trust Bldg.**  
**5 First American**  
**Way, Santa Ana**

**FOR DIRECTIONS**  
**(714) 250-3000**

**COST:**  
**\$15 lunch**  
**\$20 donation for**  
**talk**

Tim Staples was raised a Southern Baptist. Though he got away from the faith of his childhood during his teen years, he came back to faith in Christ in his late teens through Christian television and some friends in the Assemblies of God. Tim decided to join the Marine Corps and during his four-year tour, he got involved in ministry in various Assembly of God communities. Immediately after his tour of duty, Tim would become a Youth Minister in an Assembly of God Community and later enroll in Jimmy Swaggart Bible College. During his final year in the Marines, Tim met a Marine who really knew his Faith and challenged Tim to study Catholicism from Catholic and historical sources. Having been challenged, Tim was determined to prove Catholicism wrong and ended up studying his way to the last place he thought he would ever end up... the Catholic Church. Since his conversion in 1988, Tim spent six years in formation for the priesthood earning a degree in Philosophy from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Overbrook, PA. He then studied theology on a graduate level at Mt. St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md. for two years. Deciding that his calling was not to the priesthood, Tim left the seminary in 1994 and has been working in Catholic Apologetics and Evangelization ever since.

**Everyone is welcome!**  
**For questions, call Don Hunsberger (714) 663-8000**  
**or Anne Lanphar at (714) 250-1453. †**

**STM MONTHLY MTGS:**  
**3RD WEDNESDAY OF MONTH:**

**SEPTEMBER 16**  
**OCTOBER 21**  
**NOVEMBER 18**  
**DECEMBER 16 †**

**RESERVE THE DATE!**  
**RED MASS**

**MONDAY NOVEMBER 9, 2009**  
**HOLY FAMILY CATHEDRAL**  
**6:00 PM MASS**  
**RECEPTION & DINNER FOLLOWING †**

**CALENDAR**  
**REMINDERS**



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**A  
MESSAGE  
FROM  
OUR  
CHAPLAIN**



**CHRIST HOLDING  
THE CROSS**

*El Greco*

(1602)

## **DID CHRIST KNOW HE WAS GOING TO DIE?**

**FR. HUGH BARBOUR, O. PRAEM, PH.D.**

**QUESTION:** *Did Jesus know in advance what was going to happen to Him or could He only predict in the same way anyone else could: by making a good guess based on how things were going?*

**ANSWER:** When Our Lord said, *"I am the Truth,"* He meant it! It is the constant teaching of the Church that Our Lord, as both God and man, had the fullness of knowledge both of God and of created things.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 471-478) teaches quite clearly that, even as Our Lord had the natural knowledge of a man, which comes from the experience of the senses (CCC 472) and is, by its nature, limited, He also had the special knowledge of everything that pertained to His mission as the Savior (CCC 474), and the immediate knowledge of His Father (CCC 473).

Since He is the Savior of all men individually as well as collectively, He knew each one of us individually, and since there is nothing in the life of a person which does not have a bearing on his or her salvation, it is hard to think of anything about human activity and history He did not know during His life and His sufferings (CCC 478).

Since the immediate knowledge of God means *"without any medium,"* Christ knew God as the blessed in heaven do, as He is in Himself, not by some image or created vehicle.

This is true of Christ from the first moment of His conception in the womb of the Blessed Mother through His abandonment on the Cross.

In the encyclical letter *Mystici Corporis*, Pope Pius XII taught this plainly. And Pope John Paul II used the text that seems the most difficult to reconcile with this teaching to boldly reaffirm it. When giving his catechesis at the Wednesday audience of November 30, 1988, our Holy Father explained that Our Lord's words on the Cross, *"My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me?"* meant that even though Our Lord's emotional life and lower reason were stripped of all consolation, still, *"at the height of His being, He had the clear vision of God."*

Thus, it is grave error to teach that Christ was ignorant of His mission, or that He only understood it after His glorification. There are many different ways to explain and to prove this teaching in Catholic Tradition, but the teaching is clear. The argument that *"no modern theologians or Scripture scholars"* hold it, is a very untheological and worldly one. The answer is that no Fathers or Doctors of the Church, no saints, popes, or general councils teach anything else! Your teacher should actually learn Catholic theology before trying to make a living at *"teaching"* it, and in the process teaching error to young Christians, who need to know Who Christ really is. †

**You have not chosen me. I have chosen you.**

**Go and bear fruit that will last.**

**(John 15:16)**



## THE PERENNIAL MYSTERY

BISHOP NORMAN MCFARLAND

ORIGINALLY PRINTED IN JUNE 1997

In addition to a few other occasional pieces, I have written 124 consecutive essays for the *Diocese of Orange Bulletin*—one each month for a little over ten years. With the admonition of an old professor about preaching in mind, and accommodating it to the written word, I know that “You should never take pen in hand because you have to say something, but because you have something to say.” Let me just concede that my own efforts are marked more by perspiration than inspiration. I resonate with the observation made recently in *National Geographic*: “Sometimes, for professional writers, anything can be preferable to putting words down on paper. Some pace the floor aimlessly; some stare intently out the window—at nothing in particular. Still others admit to sudden urges to tidy up; somehow the worst chores are welcome when you are waiting for inspiration. Advice to aspiring writers: before you start, paint the living room. Fix the gutters. Clean out the garage. No writer should live in a new house—that denies him essential avoidance maneuvers.” (I myself swing a golf club and hit practice balls in my backyard—a recourse which has not noticeably advanced either my golfing or my writing skills).

This present bit of intelligence is occasioned by the difficulty of the topic I have inexplicably chosen for this month’s essay, considering that I do not have any more answers than I did when I audaciously addressed the subject in these pages some nine years ago. The topic is human suffering. In that former attempt I contrasted two approaches to this mystery that has plagued humanity since the beginning, the one of Albert Camus, the French existential philosopher, and the other of Rabbi Harold Kushner, whose book “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” had become a phenomenal bestseller. Camus declared “I cannot believe in a God who allows innocent children to suffer,” and affirmed his atheism. The troubled Rabbi agonized over the same problem in a personal crisis of faith occasioned by the loss of his young son, and reaffirmed his belief in the absolute goodness of a God who simply has to be less than omnipotent. In his view, the only possible explanation for suffering was that occasionally things must happen over which the all good God actually has no direct control.

Camus’ refusal to acknowledge a God who did not measure up to his own humanly conceived—and therefore greatly limited—notions and values is typical of modern man’s folly and arrogance, and also recalls the Psalmist’s condemnation of the wicked person’s assertion “There is no God,” when confronted by evil in the world.

The good Rabbi’s approach reflected a large and loving heart, but did not credit his understanding of scripture or his powers of reasoning. He was not even innovative with his notion of a helpless God, if we but recall the bizarre attempts throughout religious history to explain evil and misery by having recourse to quarrels between different gods (the Ancients), to dualist solutions involving the kingdoms of Light and Darkness (the Manichaeists of the Christian era), to satanic worship in modern times by those who believed that God has been conquered by one stronger than He is. But as a matter of fact, it remains that an appalling amount of suffering still plagues people’s lives and has them still asking man’s oldest question of God: “Why me?”

We know, of course, as Saint Paul says, “for those who love God all things work together unto good (Rom. 8:28), and we also believe in that final fulfillment in which “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning nor crying, nor pain any more” (Rev. 21:4). But it continues to be true that, humanly speaking, it is difficult and often even impossible to see how anything good can come out of the multiple miseries and tragedies which have afflicted the human race throughout history and darkened the lives of each one of us.

And I trust that the reader is not looking to me for the answer. That there *is* an an-

SIGNPOSTS

ON  
THE  
WAY

***But what are we to say about the evil and suffering that cannot directly be laid at man’s door—even with due consideration given to the residual vein of suffering in our lives from the first sin? Our Lord Himself, remember, refused to establish a systematic connection between all human misery and sin.***

(Continued from page 5) *The Perennial Mystery*

swer, I am sure—but God knows it; I don't. Once again we are enveloped in mystery here, and I can only reiterate Saint Paul's cry, "How inscrutable are His judgments, how undiscoverable His ways." What I do know is that God is both all-good and all-powerful and—recognizing the bold principle of the Prophet Amos, "Does a woe come into the city without Yahweh being its author?"—I know also that suffering must be an integral part of the Divine order. Amen.

Of course there is nothing wrong with seeking whatever glimmer of understanding is available to us—provided we do so with a humble and steady mind. It is easier, for example, to account for the existence of suffering that results from man's own evil, than that which has its source in nature or chance. Part of God's decision to create us in His image was to endow us with freedom, and freedom is a two-edged sword capable of producing good or woe—to the innocent as well as to the unjust. In this sense, therefore, God did impose a certain limitation on himself, an act of love that took a risk in giving human beings the precious gift of freedom. Suffering made possible by a misuse of this gift, is part of that love's calculated cost. Not even God can have it both ways when "both ways" would involve a contradiction.

But what are we to say about the evil and suffering that cannot directly be laid at man's door—even with due consideration given to the residual vein of suffering in our lives from the first sin? Our Lord Himself, remember, refused to establish a systematic connection between all human misery and sin (cf. Lk. 13:2 ff; Jn. 9:3).

Once again I think it is better that we do not try to say too much—at least by way of explanation—lest we find ourselves tempted by the incredibly audacious conclusions of a Camus or a Rabbi Kushner. We are, of course, grateful for Christian insights into the values that can be derived through suffering, insights from the writings of Saint Paul to those of modern spiritual authors. Paul, for example, in telling the Corinthians about all the miseries he had in Asia, says "we were left to feel like men condemned to death so that we might trust not in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." We recognize too the purifying value of suffering that can lead to growth and maturity, to the fostering of human compassion as well as its educational, intercessory and redemptive aspects.

But in the final analysis, suffering remains a mystery in the Divine dispensation that for the Christian finds its meaning only in Him whose life was so characterized by suffering that it was His distinctive mark: "A Man of Sorrows." For if suffering did not fit into the Divine plan, Christ would not have embraced it, nor would He have imposed it as *the* condition of discipleship (cf. Lk. 9:23). And that, when you come down to it, has to be answer enough for us—whether we understand it or not. †



#### CHRIST SUFFERING

Pedro Fernandez

(1510s)

## SIMPLE TRUTHS



Fulton J. Sheen

**Crosses are inescapable. Those who start with self-love have already created for themselves the possibility of millions of other crosses from those who live by the same pride. But those who discipline themselves and tame the ego by little acts of self-denial have already prepared themselves to meet crosses from the outside; they have familiarized themselves with them, and the shock is less when they are thrust on their shoulders."** †



## THE CRY OF SUFFERING

Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete\*

I would never attempt to "offer an answer" to the problem that suffering poses to believers. Suffering is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived. As a Catholic Christian, I see the problem of suffering as inseparable from the cross of Jesus. But this is not the perspective I have adopted here, because I am not speaking only to other Christians. I want to speak about experiences we all have because we are human beings, whatever our belief.

I remember what Francois Mauriac, the French Catholic writer, wrote in his introduction to Elie Wiesel's *The Night Trilogy*. As a young journalist for a Tel Aviv newspaper. Wiesel had interviewed Mauriac. Soon they were engaged in a personal conversation about the Holocaust. Mauriac told Weisel that his wife said she'd witnessed Jewish children at the Austerlitz train station being torn away from their mothers, and even though she didn't know what awaited them in the camps, she was horrified. Mauriac writes: "I believe that on that day I touched for the first time upon the mystery of iniquity whose revelation was to mark the end of an era and the beginning of another. The dream which Western man conceived in the eighteenth century, whose dawn he thought he saw in 1789 (the beginning of the French Revolution), and which, until August 2, 1914, had grown stronger with the progress of enlightenment and the discoveries of science—this dream vanished finally for me before those trainloads of little children. And yet I was still thousands of miles away from thinking that they were to be fuel for the gas chamber and the crematory."

Mauriac cannot help but think of the religious implications of this horror. In his introduction, he writes about Wiesel's own experience: "The child who tells us his story here was one of God's elect. From the time when his conscience first awoke, he had lived only for God and had been reared only on the Talmud, aspiring to initiation into the cabala, dedicated to the Eternal. Have we ever thought about the consequences of a horror that, though less apparent, less striking than the other outrages, is yet the worst of all to those of us who have faith: the death of God in the soul of a child who suddenly discovers absolute evil?"

Wiesel's own words about his experience are overwhelming: "Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my Faith forever....Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams into dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never." These words are not fiction or hyperbole. They are real life. Recalling his presence as a child at the feast of Rosh Hashanah, Wiesel writes: "That day, I had ceased to plead, I was no longer capable of lamentation. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, and God the accused. My eyes were open and I was alone—terribly alone in a world without God and without man. Without love or mercy. I had ceased to be anything but ashes, yet I felt myself to be stronger than the Almighty, to whom my life had been tied for so long."

Every fiber of my own heart vibrates with this anguished protest. I too would join Wiesel, Mauriac, and all who have experienced such horrors in cursing this face of the Infinite. And yet, there is something else in my heart that will also not go away—the certainty that this anger cannot be, and cannot be allowed to be, the last word about human life.

The last word must be the hope of the same heart that causes me still to protest, to rail against the infinite Mystery that permits such horrors to happen.

### CO-SUFFERING

In the program "The Millennial Pope" Germaine Greer speaks movingly about suf-



CRUCIFIXION

Sr Anthony van Dyck

(1622)

**"Suffering is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived. As a Catholic Christian, I see the problem of suffering as inseparable from the cross of Jesus."**

\* Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete, National Director of the ecclesial movement *Communion & Liberation*, is a columnist for the *New York Times* and has written for *The New Yorker* and other publications. He is also the spiritual advisor for *Godspy*. This article is excerpted from his book "God at the Ritz: Attraction to Infinity" published in 2002.

(Continued from page 7) *The Cry of Suffering*

fering and God, and I was asked to respond to her cry. Although a self-proclaimed atheist, Greer, with tears in her eyes, movingly expressed her deep appreciation for religious music as a human cry toward a Presence that was "just not there." Then, in the face of the sufferings of children in Africa, she added, "If God exists, I hate him."

What could I possibly say in response? Not only would a prepackaged religious reply have been insulting, but I also found an echo of her words within me. I knew her words came from her heart. I thought they were, in the truest sense of the word, authentic—honestly reflecting the author who had uttered them. I remembered that the existential writer and philosopher Jean Paul Sartre had seen such personal authenticity as a kind of sanctity. Germaine Greer is that kind of saint. I hope she doesn't mind the appellation. I use it to show my respect for those who, in the face of human suffering, cannot believe in God.

As a striving toward transcendence, creative suffering—as we've seen expressed in Germaine Greer's anguished words—opens us to others who are also suffering, thus creating a solidarity among those who suffer. To suffer together means to walk together toward transcendence. This solidarity is the proper human response to suffering. This doesn't mean that we "share the pain" of those who suffer. While this phrase is used quite often, I don't think this is possible. Nothing is more intimately personal than the pain of suffering. It is, after all, a wound in our personal identity, and personal identity cannot be shared. Each person is unique and unrepeatable. What we share is the questioning, and thus we suffer with the one who suffers. We "co-suffer" with that person.

Since suffering reflects the transcendence of the human person, since it points to a Mystery that is the author of the drama of human life, then we cannot really use suffering to deny the existence of God. Instead, it is because there is a God that suffering exists as human beings experience it. The suffering of human beings is a sign of God. What this God is like is another question.

I am reminded of C.S. Lewis's autobiographical *A Grief Observed*. He wrote about his suffering as a result of his wife's death (and her suffering in the struggle against it, especially when her hopes, raised by what appeared to be miraculous interventions, were dashed by a worsening of her illness). This suffering did not make him doubt God's existence, but God's goodness. If the meaning of suffering cannot be grasped, this response in the face of unbearable suffering is understandable. But both Lewis's and Greer's comments are at once both accusation and acknowledgment of transcendence.

And yet, this anger cannot be, and cannot be allowed to be, the last word about human life.

It is no surprise that according to some scripture scholars, the Gospel of John presents Jesus' suffering as a trial in which God is the accused. Satan is the accuser, and we are the jury. To co-suffer is to be willing to serve on the jury in the trial of God and to risk our own faith by identifying with those who suffer in their questioning of God. Even if the one who suffers can no longer articulate or express the experience of suffering, we must put that unutterable question into words for those who suffer. We must establish that solidarity, risk our own faith and identity, make a human connection with the sufferer, and cry out to God together.

Authentic suffering, then, is a dialogue, not only with God but also among humans. To co-suffer is to share the question "why," to be a companion, and to walk together toward transcendence.

The one who does not co-suffer and is not prepared to do so cannot speak about suffering. Such a person does not know the truth and does not speak the truth. That person is a "liar" or a "deceiver," to use the words of Walker Percy. The only adequate response when confronted with another person's suffering is co-suffering. It is the only way to respect the suffering of another. Co-suffering affirms the wounded personal identity of the sufferer through our willingness to expose our identity to the questioning provoked by the sufferer's pain. This willingness to share suffering is an act of love. Co-suffering is the way we love the one who suffers.

In our relationship with the one who suffers, we as co-sufferers can impose nothing on the other person. We can only help the other to ask the question "why" by asking it together—that is, by praying together. Praying together with the one who suffers is the just response to the suffering.

The cruelest response to suffering is the attempt to explain it away, to tell the one who suffers: "This is why this is happening. I'm sorry that you can't see the answer, but it's clear to me." When the apostles saw a man born blind, for example, they asked Jesus whether it was due to his sins or his parents' sins. Jesus rejected this explanation: he does not suffer because of his sins or his parents' sins: he suffers to manifest God's glory.

To look for an answer in the past is to reduce suffering to a functional problem. The functional mentality explains everything in terms of past causes. This does not do justice to the one who suffers. I call this the "secularization" of suffering, the elimination of its link with transcendence. Job's friends sought to explain the origins of Job's suffering by looking to his past, but Job bitterly protested and repeatedly rejected those explanations

*The Cry of Suffering* (Continued on page 9)



(Continued from page 8) ***The Cry of Suffering***

as, at the end of the book, did God. Philosopher Martin Heidegger said that pious persons are not the ones who recognize themselves as guilty before God when they suffer, but the ones who struggle against God.

What emerges from the struggle with God? Mystery's answer to suffering is always grace—a free grace that comes to us without conditions, without rationalizations, without explanations. Suffering can be relieved by the co-sufferer only when the co-sufferer can bring the suffering person into contact with grace and into the experience of being loved. The answer to suffering will always be an experience of grace and love.

For Job's so-called friends, Job's suffering was an occasion to construct their theology rather than an opportunity to express their love. They would not walk with him, co-suffer with him, pray with him for grace. Instead, they fit Job's suffering into a theological system that explained everything away. True friends would have acknowledged the horror he was going through, stood by him in his pain and refrained from offering an answer to or a reason for his suffering. Since suffering is experienced as a destruction that renders life meaningless, simplistic explanations trivialize the suffering. It's like saying those who suffer lose their right to full life because of something they did and now they have to pay the price. Job understood that he could not accept an explanation for his suffering; to do so would have devalued his own life and experience.

With grace, we suddenly experience the goodness of our (and others') existence, which has infinite value for its own sake. At the end of the book of Job, God asks Job to consider his origins, to realize that he was created without any claim to existence, that he is not his own maker. His existence is sheer grace. Job discovers himself as he is asked by God to consider the mystery of his human identity. By asking questions of Job, God joins, so to speak, Job's questioning. In a way, God co-suffers with Job.

Suffering is an expression of human personhood, human transcendence. God's response to our suffering, a suffering with us, respects our identity as individuals. Likewise, the most intimate encounter between human beings is through shared suffering. The communion of life born through shared suffering is the strongest interpersonal communion in the world, breaking down all barriers among human beings, and bringing us together through a bond with transcendence, with "something always greater than us."

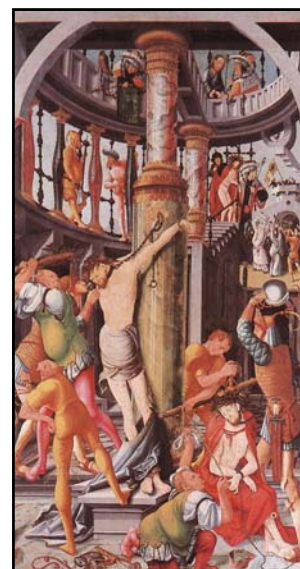
### **THE GREAT VISITOR**

***To suffer together means to walk together toward transcendence. This solidarity is the proper human response to suffering.***

Emmanuel Mounier, the founder of the French "personalist" philosophical movement, wrote that the most important aspect of human life is a "divine restlessness" in us, a divine "lack of peace" within our hearts. It is a permanent search for the meaning of life, an interest imprinted on "un-extinguished souls," on those who are not paralyzed by temporary satisfactions or ideological answers to all human questions. Indeed what makes our lives truly human is the ceaseless questioning before Mystery, before "something greater," whether we are three or ninety-three years old. This questioning allows us to see even everyday sights with the same amazement and wonder we felt the first time we saw them and to keep our hearts awake to the world around us.

This questioning also makes life worth living in the midst of even the greatest sufferings. Mounier saw those united by this approach to life as constituting a unique community, a people committed to action, to new initiatives that break ground at the deepest level of human experience and open new possibilities for humankind. The inhabitants of the world of suffering are the ones who truly transform the world. They are the true revolutionaries on behalf of human dignity. He writes of those he had met through such experience: "I have always thought that we would endure, by virtue of the organic character of our beginnings: It is from the earth, from its solidarity, that a birth full of joy takes place...and a patient feeling of a work that grows, of the stages that follow, awaited almost calmly, with assuredness (in the midst of the discomfort of days of an-

***The Cry of Suffering*** (Continued on page 10)



**FLAGELLATION  
OF CHRIST**

**Jorg Ratgeb**

**(1518)**

(Continued from page 9) *The Cry of Suffering*

guish). It is necessary to suffer so that the truth not be crystallized in doctrine, but be born from the flesh."

For Mournier, these words were not mere abstractions—he lived them. For years he and his wife desired a child, but when she finally arrived, she suffered from a terrible brain disease, which totally disfigured her. The care of the child affected every moment of their lives, day after day. "I feel a great tiredness," he wrote, "and at the same time a great calm mixed together. I think that the real, the positive, are given in the calm, by the love of our child being sweetly transformed into an offering, in a tenderness that surpasses her, originated in her, and returns to her, transforming us with her."

In his profound suffering he turns to the Mystery from which suffering originates and makes a pilgrimage to a place of miracles, begging for a miracle, but not the miracle of having the illness cured. He asks to come home again with the sick child and "know the joy of having believed in the gratuity of the grace of God (and not in its automatic therapeutical effects), the joy of knowing that a miracle is never refused to one who accepts in advance whatever form it will have when given, even if it were invisible, even if it had a crucified form, even if it were a matter of a misfortune. Instead, it is not a matter of a misfortune. We have been visited by Someone very great."

"We have been visited by Someone very great"—this is the deepest experience of which human persons are capable before the mystery of suffering. The "misfortune" becomes a claim to go beyond pure resignation to an active commitment—to "remain with you," as he says to his daughter. Co-suffering makes us stand before those who suffer, with profound awe and respect. In these experiences, "Someone very great" visits us.

And still, as we consider earlier reflections, we must ask: What about Greer? What about Wiesel? As we saw earlier, Greer and Wiesel also experienced something "very great" indeed, and it was an absolute horror.

Adam Phillips tells the story of John Cage, who attended a concert of works composed by a friend. The friend had also written the program notes, in which he said that he hoped his music would help diminish the suffering in the world. After the concert, Cage told his friend that he loved the music but hated the program notes. He didn't think there was "too much" suffering in the world. As far as he was concerned, there was the "right amount." Indeed, ideas such as "too much" or "too little" show that someone measures according to a standard. But what if there is no standard? What if the world is what it is because that's the way it all works out when all the forces of nature interact with each other at this moment in its evolution? Then concepts like too little merely indicate taste or preference, those manifestations of "nature" that we do or don't like.

There is no way of responding to Cage's position other than to recognize that the deepest demands of the human heart somehow go beyond "nature" as defined by science, since in such a view of nature, the amount of suffering in the world is, precisely as Cage's position other than to recognize that the deepest demands of the human heart somehow go beyond "nature" as defined by science, since in such a view of nature, the amount of suffering in the world is, precisely as Cage notes, always just what it has to be. Inasmuch as suffering admits of no "explanations," unless we can figure out something more to say, Cage has a point indeed.

And yet, we must also acknowledge Mournier's experience—both the tremendous suffering that he, his wife, and his daughter experienced as well as the tremendous grace. Somehow to accept without question the suffering of the Mournier family seems heartless, and to deny the grace they experienced is spiritless. We face the realization that if we are truly alive, we will always be divinely "restless"—filled with both the mystery of questions as well as the mystery of grace that we cannot comprehend without a spirit of faith.

### **ALL IS GRACE**

No theory or explanation about the origin of suffering—be it cosmic, evolutionary, other-worldly, historical, or the result of human action—can satisfy the human heart, where suffering is experienced as offensive to existence itself. In that sense the origin of suffering is something "irrational" where rational indicates the human capacity to make sense of it. It is not something merely unknown, but unknowable, a break in the fabric of understanding itself. No "cause" can explain it adequately.

I suppose that the most popular explanation of suffering is that it is the result of individual or collective guilt, a punishment for doing something that should not have been done ("sin"). Given the universality and longevity of this view, something about it must correspond within human experience. After all, the experience of guilt and the suffering it provokes is the driving force behind most religions. That is why "innocent suffering" is so scandalous and such a threat to religion.

***Somehow to accept without question the suffering of the Mournier family seems heartless, and to deny***

*The Cry of Suffering* (Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10) *The Cry of Suffering*

***the grace they experienced is spiritless.***

But if we admit that all explanations concerning the origins of suffering are unacceptable, then isn't all suffering really innocent suffering? Isn't that the point, in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, of Ivan Karamazov's argument? We will do well to recall his words. Rejecting the consolation that at the end of history we will somehow restore the harmony wounded by a child's suffering, he cries out: "Can they be redeemed by being avenged? But what do I care if they are avenged, what do I care if the tormentors are in hell, what can hell set right here? I want to forgive, and I want to embrace. I don't want more suffering. And if the suffering of children goes to make up the sum of suffering needed to buy truth, then I assert beforehand that the whole truth is not worth such a price... I don't want harmony, for love of mankind I don't want it. I want to remain with unrequited suffering... They have put too high a price on harmony; we can't afford to pay so much for admission."

Who of us has never felt some sympathy for this stunning protest, echoing it in the deepest region of our heart. And that remains the question: Why this heart-rending protest? Who put it there? The rebellion of Ivan Karamazov is a least as mysterious as the suffering he decries. Human nature is not the origin of evil and suffering. Evil is something totally alien to the way we are made, to our identity as persons. The myth of original man and woman in paradise is far more revealing of how we are made than the evil and suffering that has been inseparable from history, as we know it. The fact that the "man and woman of prehistory" lacked knowledge of good and evil does not make them less human than us—it makes them more human. It is because evil is so alien to how we are made that suffering and death are so repulsive. We cannot imagine "history" without the struggle that brings about suffering, but deep within our hearts we hear a distant echo of what could have been, of how human life was really meant to be.

Suffering, we said, puts us in the presence of, in Mounier's words, "Someone very great." But if this is so, if this "Someone very great" is not to be the origin of the horrors experienced, then this Someone must be one who can descend into the hell we have encountered. This Someone must be able and willing to enter into a relationship with us that will prevent us from sinking into the absolute loneliness that is hell. This Someone must be capable of love even in hell, for hell is not to love anymore.

The redemption of suffering and the mystery of love are inseparable. The response to suffering is not to stop caring—that, in fact, is hell—but to experience a caring that sustains us in our humanity as it was meant to be. This is the redemption that the heart seeks.

Love, though, is impossible without freedom, but freedom allows the possibility of acting against love. The freedom to love is what allows the human being to escape the limitations of what science calls nature and to experience justice and injustice.

There is an experience of freedom that is especially quite revealing. I feel free when my needs are fulfilled in all their dimensions and manifestations. Freedom, therefore, is the capacity for perfection, the capacity for being made perfect.

But we know very well that nothing ever satisfies us in such a way that we'll never desire more, or something else. Our hearts desire infinite happiness, infinite satisfaction. Freedom is the capacity for infinity. I am free each time I walk along the path that moves me to infinity, to the stars. If I choose to act in a particular way that separates me from my infinite destiny, I lose something of my freedom and move closer to that abyss of not being free, that is, of "not being able to love anymore." I can be rescued only when the attraction of infinity wins over whatever is attracting me away from it. This is the redemption of my freedom.

The redemption of suffering, inseparable from the drama of freedom, must also take the form of the attractive, loving presence of that "Someone very great" who leads



**CHRIST BEFORE  
PILATE**

*Tintoretto*

(1566)



(Continued from page 11) ***The Cry of Suffering***

me to the infinity of which I've lost sight. This Someone is willing to co-suffer with me and sustain me as capable of infinity—that is, as free. Whatever the Mystery of my origin and destiny is like, it must somehow possess and be defined by this capacity to sustain my freedom to love through co-suffering. If I call this Mystery "God," then somehow the identity of God must be expressed as the Infinite Love revealed through co-suffering with humankind.

***The redemption of suffering creates a community of those who love and offer a home to those who suffer.***

Suffering can be redeemed only by grace, by a love that is recognized as unconditional, boundless, infinite. Paradoxically the drama of innocent suffering that can move us to deny God and hate the very possibility of God's existence can also lead us to discover God. To co-suffer, though, means to risk our identity, and the God who redeems us from suffering must also be willing and able to take that risk, of appearing to us as "nondivine," or different from the absolute power that we associate with divinity. As the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas said, if there is to be an "incarnation of Transcendence," it can only take the form of absolute humility.

Human beings can humbly co-suffer with those whom they love, but in the end, this co-suffering can only be limited. Our identity, so to speak, is not strong enough to fully sustain the identity of the one who suffers. In the end, human love by itself is always confronted with death. You cannot love someone so much that you can prevent that person from dying. But what if the co-sufferer is the author of our identity? Then this co-suffering would be stronger than death.

Redemption by "divine" co-suffering, therefore, is not a matter of justice rectifying the injustice of suffering, as Ivan Karamazov imagined. Such categories make no sense if love is the ultimate word about the drama of human existence. But if human existence is not about love, then it is not about freedom either. In that case, Cage's observation that there's just the right amount of suffering in the world would be the right answer to the horror experienced by Ivan Karamazov, Germaine Greer, Elie Wiesel, and the many, many others who in the past century alone have come across the mystery of iniquity that is hell.

The redemption of suffering, as our experience indicates, cannot be found as an "ultimate answer" to a problem: it can only be an event that transforms the drama of suffering into a drama of love and shows love to be more powerful than its denial. The possibility of this event sustains a realistic hope and an unfailing determination to protect and defend human freedom and the dignity of human life.

Redemption does not eliminate suffering. Indeed, just as suffering creates a "world" of suffering, so does the redemption of suffering create a community of those who love and offer a home to those who suffer. Its presence in the world of suffering represents an invitation to free human beings to embrace a new vocation, a new mission: to join the community of "redemptive suffering," to help complete what may be lacking in its inner resources to offer a home to those who suffer, sparing them from the loneliness that is hell.

We began with Francois Mauriac's comments concerning Elie Wiesel, and it is appropriate to return to Mauriac as we close our discussion of suffering. I understand fully Mauriac's observations about his meeting with Weisel. Mauriac writes: "What did I say to him? Did I speak of that other Israeli, his brother who may have resembled him—the Crucified, whose Cross has conquered the world? Did I affirm that the stumbling block to his faith was the cornerstone of mine, and that the conformity between the Cross and the suffering of men was in my eyes the key to that impenetrable mystery whereon the faith of his childhood had perished?...We do not know the worth of one single drop of blood, one single tear. All is grace. If the Eternal is the Eternal, the last word for each one of us belongs to Him. This is what I should have told this Jewish child. But I could only embrace him, weeping." †



**THE LAMENTATION  
OF CHRIST**  
*El Greco*  
(1571)

# THE BUTTERFLY & THE COCOON



**THOUGHT  
FOR  
THE  
DAY**

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further.

So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If God allowed us to go through our lives without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. We could never fly!

I asked for Strength.....And God gave me Difficulties to make me strong.  
 I asked for Wisdom.....And God gave me Problems to solve.  
 I asked for Prosperity.....And God gave me Brain and Brawn to work.  
 I asked for Courage.....And God gave me Danger to overcome.  
 I asked for Love.....And God gave me Troubled people to help.  
 I asked for Favors.....And God gave me Opportunities.  
 I received nothing I wanted .....I received everything I needed! ✚



**FRANK & ERNEST**



## MARK 8:34

<sup>34</sup> *And calling the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

### COMMENT FROM THE NAVARRE BIBLE:\*

When Jesus said "If any man would come after me...", he was well aware that in fulfilling his mission he would be brought to death on a cross; this is why he speaks clearly about his passion (vv. 31-32). The Christian life, lived as it should be lived, with all its demands, is also a cross which one has to carry, following Christ.

Jesus' words, which must have seemed extreme to his listeners, indicate the standard he requires his followers to live up to. He does not ask for short-lived enthusiasm or occasional dedications; he asks everyone to renounce himself, to take up his cross and follow him. For the goal he sets men is eternal life. This should be evaluated in the light of this eternal life: life on earth is not definitive, but transitory and relative; it is a means to be used to achieve definitive life in heaven: "All that, which worries you for the moment, is of relative importance. What is of absolute importance is that you be happy, that you be saved" (J. Escriva, *The Way*, 297).

"There is a kind of fear around, a fear of the Cross, of our Lord's Cross. What has happened is that people have begun to regard as crosses all the unpleasant things that crop up in life, and they do not know how to take them as God's children should, with supernatural outlook. So much so, that they are even removing the roadside crosses set up by our forefathers...!"

"In the Passion, the Cross ceased to be a symbol of punishment and became instead a sign of victory. The Cross is the emblem of the Redeemer: in quo est salus, vita et resurrectione nostra: There lies our salvation, our life and our resurrection" (J. Escriva, *The Way of the Cross*, II, 5).



**THE CRUCIFIXION OF  
SAINT PETER**

*Caravaggio*

(1600)

*\*The Navarre Bible, a renown edition of Sacred Scripture prepared by members of the Faculty of Theology of Navarre University, consisting of the New Vulgate, the Revised Standard Version and commentaries. †*

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

**VOLUNTEER WITH MEMBERS OF THE LEGAL  
COMMUNITY TO HELP SERVE BREAKFAST**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH**

**BREAKFAST 8:30-10:30 AM**

**FOLLOWED BY MASS**



**OC CATHOLIC WORKER  
316 Cypress, Santa Ana, CA  
(714) 558-7478**

**For more information, contact:**

Greg Weiler (949) 851-7238 or [gweiler@ptwww.com](mailto:gweiler@ptwww.com) or  
Steve Cotungo (949) 412-8663 or [scotungo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:scotungo@sbcglobal.net)



## MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI\*

### *Relationship between the Cross of Christ and Suffering*

*Thursday June 25, 2009*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Dear Sick People,*

On my visit to San Giovanni Rotondo, I could not omit a stop at the Home for the Relief of Suffering, conceived of and desired by St Pio of Pietrelcina as a "place of prayer and science where the human race united in the Crucified Christ becomes one flock with one Shepherd". For this very reason he wished to entrust it to the material and, above all, spiritual support of the Prayer Groups, who have here the centre of their mission of service to the Church. Padre Pio intended that in this well-equipped hospital one could experience first-hand that the commitment of science to treating the sick must never be separated from filial trust in God, who is infinitely kind and merciful. When he inaugurated the Home on 5 May 1956 he described it as a "creature of Providence" and spoke of this institution as "a seed planted on earth by God, which he will warm with the rays of his love".

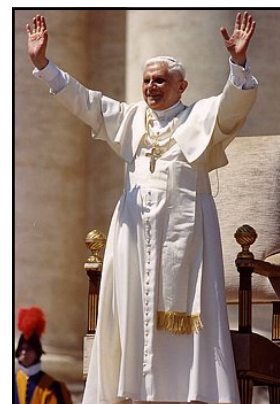
Here I am among you, therefore, to thank God for the good that you have been doing in this "Home for the Relief of Suffering" for more than 50 years, faithful to the instructions of a humble Capuchin Friar with results recognized at both the scientific and medical levels. Unfortunately it is not possible for me, much as I would like to, to visit every ward and greet the patients one by one, together with those who nurse them. But I do wish to extend to each one the patients, doctors, relatives, health-care workers and pastoral workers a word of paternal comfort and encouragement to continue in this evangelical work together which aims to relieve peoples' suffering, making the most of every resource for the human and spiritual good of the sick and their relatives.

With these sentiments, I cordially greet you all, starting with you, brothers and sisters who are tried through illness. Next, I greet the doctors, the nurses and the health-care and administrative staff. I greet you, venerable Capuchin Fathers, who as chaplains are continuing the apostolate of your holy Confrère. I greet the Prelates, first of all Archbishop Domenico Umberto D'Ambrosio, the former Pastor of this Diocese who is now called to guide the archdiocesan community of Lecce. I am grateful to him for the words he has kindly addressed to me on your behalf. I then greet the Director General of the Hospital, Dr Domenico Crupi, and the representatives of the sick, and I am grateful for the kind words they have just addressed to me, enabling me to be better acquainted with what is being achieved here and with the spirit in which you do it. Every time one enters a place of healing, one thinks naturally of the mystery of illness and pain, to the hope of healing and the inestimable value of good health, of which one becomes aware only when it has been lost. In hospitals one sees first-hand the preciousness of our existence but also its fragility. Following the example of Jesus who travelled throughout Galilee "healing every disease and every infirmity among the people" (Mt 4: 23), the Church, from her origins moved by the Holy Spirit, has considered it one of her duties and privileges to be at the side of those who suffer cultivating a preferential attention to the sick.

Illness, which is manifested in so many forms and strikes in different ways, gives rise to disturbing questions: why do we suffer? Can the experience of pain be consid-



**FROM  
PETER'S  
SUCCESSOR,  
POPE  
BENEDICT XVI**



*\* Meeting with the Sick, the medical, Paramedical and Administrative Staff of the Health-Care Structure at the Home for the Relief of Suffering*

**Papal Message** (Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15) Papal Message

ered positive? Who can free us from suffering and death? These are existential questions that more often than not remain humanly unanswerable, since suffering constitutes an enigma that is inscrutable to human reason. Suffering is part of the very mystery of the human person. I emphasized this in the Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, noting that: it "stems partly from our finitude, and partly from the mass of sin which has accumulated over the course of history, and continues to grow unabated today". And I added that: "certainly we must do whatever we can to reduce suffering: ... but to banish it from the world altogether is not in our power. This is simply because... none of us is capable of eliminating the power of evil,... which,... is a constant source of suffering" (cf. n. 36).

God alone can eliminate the power of evil. Precisely because Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal to us the divine plan of our salvation, faith helps us to penetrate the meaning of all that is human, hence also of suffering. Thus an intimate relationship exists between the Cross of Jesus the symbol of supreme pain and the price of our true freedom and our pain, which is transformed and sublimated when it is lived in the awareness of God's closeness and solidarity. Padre Pio sensed this profound truth and, on the first anniversary of the inauguration of this Institution, he said that in it "the suffering person must experience God's love through the wise acceptance of his sufferings in serene meditation on his own destiny" (*Discourse*, 5 May 1957). He noted further that in the Home for the Relief of Suffering "the patients, doctors and priests shall be reservoirs of love" and that "the more abundant love is in oneself, the better communicated it will be to others" (*ibid.*).

To be "reservoirs of love": this, dear brothers and sisters, is the mission of which, this evening, our Saint reminds you who in various capacities form the great family of this Home for the Relief of Suffering. May the Lord help you to realize the project initiated by Padre Pio with the contribution of all: doctors and scientific researchers, health-care workers and various administrative personnel, volunteers and benefactors, Capuchin Friars and other Priests. We must not forget the Prayer Groups who "alongside the Home for the Relief of Suffering are in the front line of this citadel of charity, nurseries of faith and hearts of love" (Padre Pio, *Discourse*, 5 May 1966). I invoke upon each and every one the intercession of Padre Pio and the motherly protection of Mary, Health of the Sick. I thank you again for your welcome and as I assure you of my prayers for each one of you, I warmly bless you all. †



**SAINT MARTIN AND  
THE BEGGAR**

*El Greco*

(1604)

## PRAYER PETITIONS



**Heavenly Father, I offer you this day  
all that I shall think, do or say,  
uniting it with what was done  
by Jesus Christ, your only Son. Amen**

**If you have a special need for  
prayer, please let us know so  
by emailing your request to  
alanphar@firstam.com**

- ◆ Patricia Goethels (sick)
- ◆ Judi McEachen (deceased)
- ◆ Dr. Douglas McKee (deceased)
- ◆ Bill Allard (special intention)
- ◆ Carol Flynn (illness)
- ◆ Carli Whittemore
- ◆ Ryan McEachon (special intention)
- ◆ Heather Flynn USAF (special intention)
- ◆ John Flynn IV USNA (special intention)
- ◆ Kathy Todd (cancer)
- ◆ Julia Nelson (serious illness)
- ◆ Sean Nelson (illness)
- ◆ Scott Smith (illness)
- ◆ Anne Lanphar (special intention)
- ◆ Children in Juvenile Hall
- ◆ Homeless and Isaiah House †

## MORE ON THE LAST FOUR THINGS

More states in the introduction to his own version of *The Four Last Things* (death, judgment, heaven and hell) that the consideration of this topic “contains more fruitful advice and counsel to the forming and framing of man’s manners in virtue and avoiding of sin than many whole and great volumes of the best old philosophers or any other that ever wrote in secular literature.” These four “herbs” make up a medicine of such strength that they could keep the soul from sickness throughout life....

As he did with his “Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle,” More begins by inviting the reader to consider the relative value of pleasure. Pleasure is his starting point, he says, because “I well perceive the world so set upon the seeking of pleasure that they set by pleasure much more than by profit.” Throughout the first part, he tries to show the truth of that Christian paradox whereby “abandoning and refusing carnal pleasure while pursuing labor, travail, penance, and bodily pain will bring with it to a Christian—not only in the world to come, but also in this present life—real sweetness, comfort, pleasure, and gladness.”

This paradox recalls a major theme of his first spiritual handbook: that the pleasure of fleshly delight is not a genuine or lasting pleasure; that it is “but a false, counterfeit image of pleasure.” To order ones life to such counterfeit images will cause a “grudge and grief of conscience that makes the stomach wamble...and vomit.” Whoever persists in pursuing such counterfeits will “by a mischievous custom of sin perceive no fault in his evil deed” and will thereby “lose the natural light of reason and the spiritual light of faith.”

**Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage** Gerard Wegemer Scepter Publishers (p. 92-3) †



## THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS MORE

**Ad Risum Vertere Veritatem\***



\*Latin for “To turn truth into laughter”

## GOD & EVE

Eve calls out to God "Lord, I have a problem"

"What's the problem, Eve?"

"Lord, I know you've created me and have provided this beautiful garden and all of these wonderful animals, and that hilarious comedic snake, but I'm just not happy."

"Why is that, Eve?" came the reply from above.

"Lord, I am lonely. And I'm sick to death of apples."

"Well, Eve, in that case, I have a solution. I shall create a man for you."

"What's a 'man', Lord?"

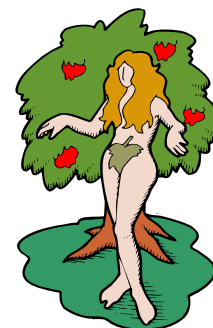
"This man will be a flawed creature, with aggressive tendencies, an enormous ego and an inability to empathize or listen to you properly. All in all, he'll give you a hard time. But, he'll be bigger, faster and more muscular than you. He'll also need your advice to think properly. He'll be really good at fighting and kicking a ball about, hunting fleet-footed ruminants, and not altogether bad to have around to help with chores."

"Sounds great," says Eve, with an ironically raised eyebrow. "What's the catch, Lord?"

"Yeah, well.... you can have him on one condition."

"What's that, Lord?"

"You'll have to let him believe that I made him first." †



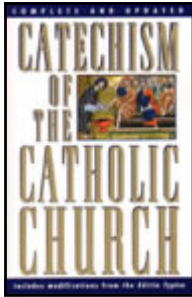


# THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## PART TWO: CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY

### SECTION TWO : THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

#### CHAPTER TWO: THE SACRAMENTS OF HEALING



## CATECHISM CORNER



**CHRIST CARRYING  
THE CROSS**

*Hieronymus Bosch*

(1480s)

**1500** Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death.

**1501** Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him.

The sick person before God

**1502** The man of the Old Testament lives his sickness in the presence of God. It is before God that he laments his illness, and it is of God, Master of life and death, that he implores healing. Illness becomes a way to conversion; God's forgiveness initiates the healing. It is the experience of Israel that illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil, and that faithfulness to God according to his law restores life: "For I am the Lord, your healer." The prophet intuits that suffering can also have a redemptive meaning for the sins of others. Finally Isaiah announces that God will usher in a time for Zion when he will pardon every offense and heal every illness.

#### **CHRIST THE PHYSICIAN**

**1503** Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people" and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins; he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of. His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me." His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.

**1504** Often Jesus asks the sick to believe. He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands, mud and washing. The sick try to touch him, "for power came forth from him and healed them all," and so in the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us.

**1505** Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases." But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world," of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion.

"Heal the sick . . ."

**1506** Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross in their turn. By following him they acquire a new outlook on illness and the sick. Jesus associates them with his own life of poverty and service. He makes them share in his ministry of compassion and healing: "So they went out and preached that men should repent. and they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them."

**1507** The risen Lord renews this mission ("In my name . . . they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.") and confirms it through the signs that the Church performs by invoking his name. These signs demonstrate in a special way that Jesus is truly "God who saves."

**1508** The Holy Spirit gives to some a special charism of healing so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord. But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses. Thus St. Paul must learn from the Lord that "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," and that the sufferings to be endured can mean that "in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church."

**1509** "Heal the sick!" The Church has received this charge from the Lord and strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick as well as by accompanying them with her prayer of intercession. She believes in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies. This presence is particularly active through the sacraments, and in an altogether special way through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St. Paul suggests is connected with bodily health.

**1510** However, the apostolic Church has its own rite for the sick, attested to by St. James: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders [presbyters] of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." Tradition has recognized in this rite one of the seven sacraments. ✠

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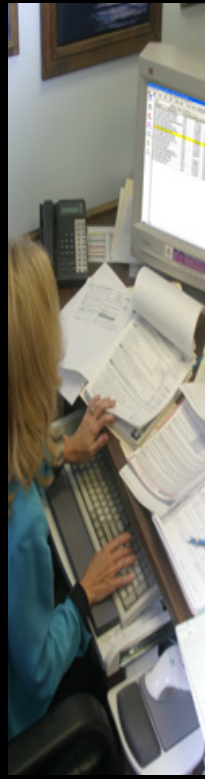


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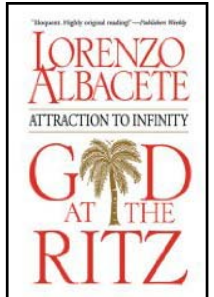


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