

DEAR DEACON BULLETIN INSERT

❖ Dear Deacon Jim,

I was raised Catholic, went to Catholic school, nuns, and all! As a child, we were constantly told how God was always there for us, how he protected us, how no harm would come to us, and as a child, I absorbed that from a child's point of view. Down the road of life, as an adult, when I see bad things happen to good people, loss of a loved one, horrible diseases, fires, floods, abuse of innocent children, murders. I find it so hard to believe a God who loves us so much could stand by and not stop these harmful life occurrences and protect us! Yes, I know, free will, people have free will, but how about the victim of that bad free will? They did not sign on to be a victim! How do you hold on to your faith through pain and sorrow and life's bad side? I know there are wonderful, happy, experiences too, and regardless of my doubts, I never fail to pray, day and night, and attend mass which gives me a place of peace. So, what is the answer to why do I have difficulty with my faith?

❖ Response

First, you are to be commended for your Catholic upbringing and maintaining the practice of your faith as an adult despite the many tragedies experienced and the suffering, we see all around us.

How can a God who loves me allow me to experience pain and suffering? It just does not seem to add up. When terrible things happen, we want answers and believe me, you are certainly not alone. That "why" question goes back thousands of years. It was asked in the Old Testament and by the writers of the Psalms. I believe many books have been written on this very topic.

The truth is we cannot know the reasons why God lets terrible things happen. We live in a world that is stained by sin, so difficulties and disappointments are bound to cross our path.

God did not create evil and suffering. Yes, he did indeed create the potential for evil to enter the world, because that was the only way to create the potential for genuine goodness and love. But it was human beings, in our free will as you point out, who brought about that evil. As we see in scripture (Genesis), the choice of Adam and Eve to disobey their Creator led to evil being allowed to enter the world, permanently changing our lives and the world around us.

Scripture is clear that God grieves over the very things that we grieve over. Those people who inflict suffering will be judged and receive the just punishment they deserve for their wrongdoings.

Unless you accept God's grace to deal with suffering, inevitably you will become bitter. However, if you choose to trust God to bring about His purposes through suffering, you can avoid that bitterness and grow in the grace of the Lord.

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We see in scripture that God made it clear that the earthly suffering we are experiencing, is only for a moment considering eternity with Him but only if we respond by looking to the Lord

Not only may suffering lead us to a closer union with Christ, but God can bring good out of the evils we experience. Remember, without faith, there is no hope.

Deacon Jim