

THE MAGDALENE



**From the Desk of
Fr. Neil...**

ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT UNDERSTANDING SUFFERING

Here is another look the topic of suffering. In the 12th chapter of Hebrews, the writer addresses suffering by telling us why it happens, who it happens to, how to understand it and even why we must accept it.

First, we should note that the writer is addressing Christians. This is not a letter to everyone. He is talking to Christians. This needs to be said, because very little of it applies to an unbeliever. In chapter 11, he has just finished listing all of the great saints of the Old Testament who have gone before us, suffered, have endured, remained faithful and have been rewarded with eternal life because of their faithful perseverance.

Since Christians are all saints of God, living by faith, we can learn from and share in their perseverance. We are surrounded by these great witnesses of the faith. We look to them as examples of courage and endurance in running the race that is our own Christian life. Primarily, thought, we are to look to Jesus, who is the founder of our faith and the one who perfects it as He works in us day by day. Jesus, the very definition of suffering, endured the cross and all of what went with it, despised the shame of it, persevered through it, and set his whole mind on the joy that was set before Him which

culminated in the sitting down at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

Therefore, to answer the question of who it happens to, it happens to all of us who are in Christ and running that same race of faithful patience and endurance. If you are suffering, you are not alone. Your Christian brothers are also suffering alongside of you to one degree or another.

Second, why does it happen? The writer to the Hebrews likens or links suffering to discipline - discipline sent by God for our benefit - the benefit of endurance as sons of God. This is very counterintuitive even for Christians who are not familiar with this concept. God calls us each 'sons'. We are sons of God as Christians. As sons, we struggle against sin. Sin is what brings suffering. Not that we purposely sin and then God punishes us. Sin is the curse that remains after the fall of Adam and Eve. Suffering is the result of their disobedience and we reap the same difficulties because we are descendants of Adam and inheritors of what his disobedience brought. Suffering, then, is discipline. We may not have done anything wrong in any particular circumstance, but discipline is what God brings. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives." (Prov. 3:11-12)

Because God loves us, He sends disciplining suffering to us. It is not because we have done something wrong, per se, but it is because God perfectly knows what we need and how much and how long we need it, in order to bring about great, holy and perfect results. "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons.

Acquiring Truth

If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." (Heb. 12:7-8)

Understanding it and accepting it may be the hardest aspects of the whole process.

Why me? Why now? Why this kind? Why this long? Why this severe? These questions are all legitimate, but the answer lies in the exhortations given in verses 13 and 14, "...make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."

Understanding it and accepting suffering as long-term healing, can only happen by the grace of God. Accepting it will not always come quickly, easily or fully. All that we can do is encourage one another with these words. "Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees. Strive for...holiness... without which no one will see the Lord."

As Christians, we are all "in this" together. We must not let suffering make us bitter. It is the design and decree of God that His children suffer from time to time. It is His chosen path for us to holiness as it was for His Son, Jesus Christ. By suffering, we can know that we have now entered part way into the heavenly Jerusalem...into the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven...to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

Suffering is designed to produce a mature and holy Christian. It is designed to make us perfect. Let us then strive to see it as the work of God in us, and not against us.

"What's Paul speaking of when he says, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike" in Romans 14?"

In this chapter of Romans, Paul speaks of eating and drinking and links them to the observance of a day. But to what is he referring? Some interpret this as referring to Old Testament dietary laws and the Sabbath. Leon Morris writes, "This has often been taken to mean that the weak brother observes the Jewish Sabbath. But Paul does not say this, and it is equally possible that he is referring to feast days and fast days."¹

The Sabbath is not specifically named in the text. Paul discusses eating meat verses vegetables, drinking, and connects these to the observance of a day in the context of "disputes over doubtful things" (Rom. 14:1). There is neither a biblical law against eating meat nor a prohibition against wine. Additionally, the Sabbath day doesn't have specific eating or drinking practices associated with it.

**St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church
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Rev. Fr. Neil Edlin, Rector**

**Sunday Services:
8am Mass
10am Choral Mass &
Children's Sunday School**

**Wednesday Service &
Anointing of the Sick: 9am**

¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 480.

It seems a more fitting scenario is that Paul is speaking of voluntary fasting days. Harrison observes, "The close contextual association with eating suggests that Paul has in mind a special day set apart for observance as a time for feasting or as a time for fasting."² We find a biblical example of this with the Pharisee fasting twice a week, which was not commanded in Scripture (Luke 18:12). Likewise, a similar early church practice is seen in the Didache, "But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth days of the week. But do you either fast the entire five days, or on the fourth day of the week, and on the day of the Preparation."³ Paul, speaking in this chapter of voluntary fasting days, fits well with both the matter of adiaphora or "doubtful things" and the linking of eating and drinking practices with a specific day.

CURRENT EVENTS

WE NEED YOU LABOR DAY WEEKEND

Starting on Friday, August 30st through September 1st, our Church Parking Lot will become a Concession Parking Lot for the **Labor Day International Street Fair**.

We need everyone who has signed up to work this event to show up for their shift. Talk to Elizabeth about special parking reserved for our workers. This is the only fundraiser we have that supports our own church. The money earned goes towards church parking lot maintenance and repair.

² Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, 146.

³ Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, vol. 7, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, 469.

What Do I Do on My Shift? Direct the customer into a space and take their money. We sell parking spaces for \$10.00 per car for our side of the parking lot, and \$5.00 for motorcycles.

Does The Church Offer Food? No. If you don't feel like fair food, bring a picnic lunch.

Am I Standing Out In The Hot Sun All Day? No. We have a Pop-Up tent set up with a table and chairs for the volunteers. We do suggest bringing a hat and wear shorts or something cool.

How Long Do I Have To Stay? You must stay for your entire shift. If you start your shift and there are others under the tent, please do not leave. Many of our parishioners just like to stay and socialize.

It's truly lots of fun. You even get to enjoy the fair music right from our own outdoor tent.

PATRIOT'S DAY SERVICE

Please come and support our veterans and military service men and women by **wearing red, white and blue on September 9th at 10am service**. Fr. Neil will be announcing Roll Call for all branches of the military and a Roster of family service men and women will be present.

MEMORIAL & ESTATE PLANNING AT THE LAST BROWN BAG LUNCHEON

On **September 29th at 11:30am**, Fr. Neil will be providing us with an opportunity to plan for or update our own Memorial Service instead of your family. This planning is not about picking out a funeral home or where you are going to be buried. It is about helping a bereaved family through planning your Memorial service and



reception. You will have a chance to write down what hymns you want, if a choir will be present or just a soloist, where you want to have your reception, and what kind of food that will be served to your friends and family.

He will be joined by Lisa Zaradich, Attorney, who can give you some pointers on Estate Planning. She will guide you through the “do’s and don’ts” of trusts and wills.

The Guild women will be selling egg salad and cold cut sandwich lunches for \$5.00. Please come and join in for this last Brown Bag lecture for the year.

PACK-A-SACK FOR MARY’S KITCHEN

September 28th at 9am, some of us will gather in the Parish Hall kitchen to make peanut butter and jam sandwiches. Others will form an assembly line to pack paper lunch bags with our home made PB&J sandwiches and other snack foods to satisfy a hearty appetite. Once completed, the men will courier these lunches to Mary’s Kitchen in Orange to be handed out at noon to our local homeless in the area.

The Guild women are asking for donations of small cans of Vienna Sausages. We need 200 to fill our quota for these lunches. Please consider picking up a couple of cans the next time you are at Walmart or Stater Bros. Watch for a donation receptacle in the Narthex.

MULTI-RESIDENCE GARAGE SALE

The Guild women will be selling the New2You items stored at the church on **Saturday, October 5th**. We are NOT accepting donations at this time so please do not bring anything to the church. If you would like to help, please talk to Elizabeth or Violet.

NEWS

WINSTON CHURCHILL AND JOHN WAYNE RELATED... REALLY?

Dr. David Freeman from the International Churchill Society joined us in the Parish Hall for lunch and spoke about the relationship between Winston Churchill and John Wayne. So what did we discover? The two are related! The lecture was quite rousing and was thoroughly enjoyed. Our special thanks to the Guild women who hosted the luncheon. Dr. Freeman was asked if he would come back and speak about British history. He said yes. Watch for notices on our 2020 Brown Bag Lectures.

THE WOMEN’S INTERNATIONAL TEA RAISES \$1,800 FOR OUTREACH

Thanks again to all the women who attended this exceptional event. Most especially, Karen Carlson, Xinli VonMizener, Lisa Zaradich, MJ Osborn, Nancy Taylor, Niki Strate and Jeannie Lawrence who created a fabulous atmosphere with their beautifully decorated tables. Everything for this event was donated so 100 percent of the \$1,800 raised will go towards our Outreach Missions program.

SAVE THE DATE

4TH SUNDAY BRUNCH IS BACK

Mark your calendar for Sunday October 27th to share in brunch and fellowship at the Katella Grill. You must sign up on the reservation sheet to sit with the group. If you do not, the restaurant will place you on the “wait” list for the next open table.