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“Why? Why Me?”

Richard A. Watson, M.D.

Father's Day, 1988

The author is a physician in Newington, Virginia. He notes that while the style of the article may be more dramatic and personal than usual for Linacre, readers “might find helpful the insight it offers from the perspective of a physician and father.”

It was 6 o'clock in the morning, ten years ago. I was kneeling on the floor, holding in my arms the dead body of my six-week-old baby boy, Mark Thomas. I was not thinking about God at the moment. Indeed, I was hardly able to think at all. Rational thought had given way to a log jam of emotions, a panicked sense of unrealness, disbelief, frustration, rage, and helplessness. An accusing voice within me challenged, “You are his daddy; you are a doctor: **“DO SOMETHING! DO SOMETHING!”**

But there was nothing that could be done; he had died sometime in the night. They call it Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, “Crib Death”. The body was cold; resuscitation impossible.

In the following hours, so many thoughts, so many emotions raced through my mind. I turned to God at one and the same time both in prayer and in anger. I never needed God's help more. I prayed for strength. And yet, another force within me would lash out in anger. “Why me, God? Whatever I have done wrong in my life, I do not deserve this — not this. I want my baby back. Why are you doing this to me? Why? Why me?”

In the weeks that followed, many well-intentioned Christians, modern day Job's counselors, offered my wife and me all sorts of speculation, second-guessing God's reasons and intent. None of their rationalizations were of avail to us. At last, a Christian missionary to Africa who had suffered extreme personal hardship, shared a cogent point of view. She said that God fully realizes that in this world there can never be an adequate explanation for such intense and seemingly pointless pain and loss. Yet through this trial, God offers us, as a special grace, a challenging test of our love for Him. “Can you love Me enough to trust Me and love Me still; even though I cannot reveal, not while you are yet in the world, the reason for this harsh and unmerited suffering?”

Having experienced a tragedy of this magnitude, I found that I have become more intensely sensitive to the suffering of others, especially of

other fathers. Some years back, a little girl fell into a deep dry well and lay there trapped for many hours. The impenetrable bedrock surrounding the well prevented rescuers from reaching the child. At first they were not certain whether the little girl had survived the fall. Finally they were able to lower a small microphone down into the well. What a relief it must have been for that father to hear his little girl singing a nursery rhyme and to know she was alive! Oh, but then to hear her suddenly cry out, "Daddy, it hurts me. Daddy, Daddy, where are you?"

"Oh, my little baby girl, don't you worry. Your Daddy's coming! If I have to claw through the granite with my bare, bleeding knuckles, your Daddy's coming!" But there was really nothing that her Daddy could do. All through the long hours of the night, as rescuers inched their painstaking way toward the goal, the unanswered cries of the little girl were recorded. "Daddy, Daddy, where is my Daddy?"

Another time, the newspapers carried the story of a father who watched his home burning down. His little boy was trapped in the flames. He and the firemen could hear the little boy's voice, but could not reach him through the flames. "Daddy, Daddy; it hurts. Daddy, where are you? Please, come help me!" How that father must have suffered; it took three men to hold him back!

While God may not, in this world, justify to our human minds our seemingly senseless suffering, Our Heavenly Father has lifted up as a comfort to us His own example in the suffering of His Only Begotten Son. He cannot yet say, "Let Me explain." What He has said for now is, "I and My Son will suffer first — for you."

It seems to me that the Church teaches us much (and there is no end to all we can learn) by focusing on Jesus, God the Son, and how He suffered for us on Calvary. However, it is not very often that our attention is turned to the pain that God the Father bore for each of us and for our salvation on Calvary Hill. For us fathers, there can be special understanding and insight: that the Father God, the Creator of all the universe, the heavens and the seas, would hold back and watch while mortal men nailed His Only-Begotten Son to a tree. And watch His Son, His naked body racked with pain, search the black, uncaring sky, crying out across all history, "Abba, Abba: Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani" "Daddy, Daddy, where are you? I need you now. Why are You letting them do this to me? Why?"

What power in all creation could hold back, like those firemen's arms, the immediate, wrathful intervention of Almighty God, Our Father? Only one power, the power of God's love for you and for me.

But why was all this necessary? Why?

My wife and I take consolation in our belief that God has seen fit to share with us, mirrored in our mortal reliving, the brutal suffering that He Himself endured in the death of His Son out of love for you and me. In that faith and hope, we look forward to the time when God invites us into His heavenly kingdom. On that day, I will bring along with me neither bitterness nor anger. Rather, I do plan to bring along a whole bagful of

questions. And on top of the bag will be the big one, "WHY? — Why did my son have to die? And why did Yours? Why is there pain and suffering? And why sickness and death?"

Because God, in His goodness, has shared this one special insight now, there will be then, with all these questions, neither rancor nor remorse. Rather, as one imperfect, unworthy father to the Father Who is God, I will be free at last to ask, and free to understand, fully and joyfully, for all eternity: "Why? Why me?"

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