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Message from the Spiritual Advisor

The reality of suffering confronts the medical and para-medical person everyday. In the person who suffers, we often find deep faith, great courage, patience, hope. Any many times we might as easily find bitterness, hopelessness, cynicism, a desire to die. The physician who shares the process of healing can experience deep gratitude and gladness. He can equally experience sadness and frustration as he sees suffering increase and life grow weak in spite of all his personal and professional efforts.

In spite of all man's effort, suffering just won't go away; and a growing acquaintance with suffering indicates that, in all its forms and dimensions, suffering comes to the good as well as the wicked. Our belief in a provident, good, and loving God continues to prompt the question: "How do you explain suffering?" It is the question the Catholic physician is often expected to answer.

I recommend to our physicians a beautiful treatise on Suffering by Father Louis Evely, in a book so entitled. To whet your appetite, here are a few passages.

"The 'impassiveness' of God is perhaps a philosophical necessity. Both the 'God of Jesus Christ'...suffers. The Father of the crucified...suffers. And the shepherd anxious about his lost sheep, running after them in brambles and thickets, suffers.

"The smug, comfortable happiness, which a certain rational way of God suggests, repels us and rightly so. It is not in that way that God is spoken of God. We feel instinctively that the revelation of God takes place at the level of the greatest suffering.

"The most precious image we have of God is that of a severely wounded person who is dying. God wanted us to find Him again and to venerate Him in the poor, the wounded, the insane. He established between Him and us a mystical solidarity which allows his sufferings to become ours, as ours were his.

"But let us be careful, once more, that the suffering which is thus made sacred, is the suffering of the Redeemer, a suffering born of love, full of love.

"Christ is not only the being who suffers the most, He is above all the one who saves the most. He came to 'save what was lost'. We should not have that mystique of perdition, the obsession of suffering, but the obsession of salvation.

"If any person who suffers is sacred to us, because of Him whom he resembles any person who nurses, who helps someone to his feet, who consoles or heals, is even more completely the image of Christ."

There is no complete answer to a mystery as deep as suffering, but these few thoughts might help. Knowledge of Christ and His words will help most.

Father Kenneth MacKinnon