

God Help Us

Catholic Link articles are always prepared two months in advance to allow for layout, printing and dispatch. We are not a newspaper reporting on current affairs. News changes daily. But the coronavirus pandemic is not a passing curiosity. It is a global phenomenon that will take months and years to process.

One of the questions an event of this magnitude poses is a question as old as the hills – certainly as old as Abraham or Job. How does the God of Love allow suffering? Why do bad things happen to good people? When humans suffer does God also suffer, or does God simply look on as an innocent bystander?

Early theological tradition saw its “noble” task as one of barring any mention of suffering in God. Influenced by Greek philosophy, which saw God as “a-pathic” (free of suffering), Christianity initially promoted a God far removed from human realities. Today, thanks mainly to women theologians, we are recovering a more biblical concept of God who is clearly with humanity in its suffering. While philosophers may grapple with the mystery of God “ad intra” (internally), the Bible tells a story of God “ad extra” (externally). There is no clearer text about God reaching outwardly than in the gospel for the Feast of the Trinity: “For God so loved the world that God gave his only Son...” (John 3:16). In Christ Incarnate, God has poured His divinity into everything human: joy and pain, happiness and suffering, birth and death (and everything in between).

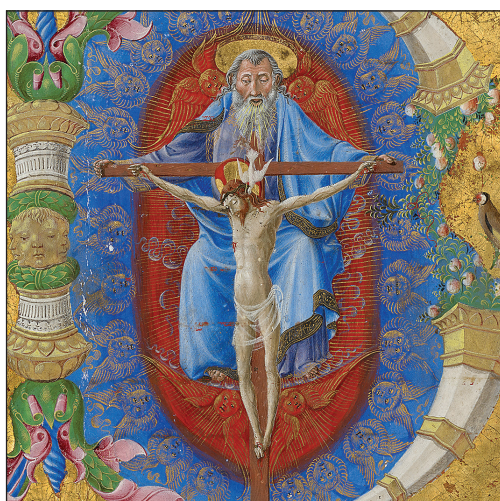
The mystery of human suffering is beyond the capacity of our brains to come up with clever

answers. Only poets, mystics and prophets have been able, oh so lightly, to articulate words that give hope. “Ours were the sufferings he bore”, wrote Isaiah about the Suffering Servant (whom Christians on Good Friday proclaim to be Jesus Christ); “ours were the sorrows he carried” (Isaiah 53:4). Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II, struggled to see God in the midst of horrendous suffering which he and his fellow Jews endured, until one day, as he witnessed a small boy hanging from a tree with others as punishment for some prisoners escaping, prayed to God: “Where are you in all this?”. To which a voice spoke to him in the silence of his heart: “I am there, hanging on that tree!”

Etty Hillesum did not live to tell the tale. She died in Auschwitz.

Before that, she was confined to Westerbork transit camp outside Amsterdam. Etty worked tirelessly, bringing hope and comfort to her fellow Jews, especially the elderly and the vulnerable. She wrote in her diary a prayer to God: “Alas, there doesn’t seem to be much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold you responsible. You cannot help us, but we must help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last.”

Our Trinitarian God is a compassionate Father welcoming home a prodigal son; a loving Saviour who so identified with human suffering that he could say “you did it to me”; a dynamic Spirit who breathes new life in the midst of death and renews the face of the earth. Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!



The Trinity, tempera and gold on parchment by Taddeo Crivelli, from a manuscript from 1460–70; in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. God the Father holds the crucified Christ, with the dove – as the Holy Spirit – between the two.

SUNDAY MASS

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

Blest be God the Father, and the Only Begotten Son of God, and also the Holy Spirit; for he has shown us his merciful love.

FIRST READING: Exodus 34:4-6, 8-9.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Daniel 3:29-34.

RESPONSE:

You are to be praised and highly exalted forever.

1. Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers, and to be praised and highly exalted forever; and blessed is your glorious, holy name and to be highly praised and highly exalted forever. **R**
2. Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory and to be extolled and highly glorified forever. **R**
3. Blessed are you upon the throne of your kingdom and to be extolled and highly exalted forever. **R**
4. Blessed are you, who sit upon cherubim and look upon the deeps, and to be praised and highly exalted forever. **R**
5. Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven and to be sung and glorified forever. **R**

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit to God who is, who was, and who is to come. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: John 3:16-18.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

Since you are children of God, God has sent into your hearts the Spirit of his Son, the Spirit who cries out: Abba, Father.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 8 Jun Liturgy of the Day

1 Kings 17:1-6; Psalm 121; Matthew 5:1-12

Who are the poor in spirit? They are the 'lowly', the 'humble', but most especially those 'who recognise their complete dependence on God'. God is the source of our strength, our guide and companion.

Tue 9 Jun (St Ephrem, DcD)

1 Kings 17:7-16; Psalm 4; Matthew 5:13-16

Does your life bring joy and light into the hearts of others? Do your good deeds glorify the Lord? Through prayer and reflection find a creative way of putting your faith into action.

Wed 10 Jun Liturgy of the Day

1 Kings 18:20-39; Psalm 16; Matthew 5:17-19

Our society seems to be overtaken by a negative energy of judgment and attack. As Christians we need to ground our energy in compassion. We do not need to respond angrily to everyone we judge to be at fault.

Thu 11 Jun CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST

Genesis 22:9-18; Psalm 40; Matthew 26:36-42

Our relationship with God can never be separated from our relationships with one another. If we want a good relationship with God, we need to open our eyes to the holy in all the ordinary things of life.

Fri 12 Jun (St Onophrius, H)

1 Kings 19:9.11-16; Psalm 27; Matthew 5:27-32

The thing about love and faith is that not one of us is perfect at either. But whether its gentle correction or sharing a prayer practice, our legacy continues in the way we encourage others to share the Good News.

Sat 13 Jun St Anthony of Padua, PrD

1 Kings 19:19-21; Psalm 16; Matthew 5:33-37

To truly understand healing you need to have been ill; to truly understand forgiveness you need to experience the pain of your own sin; to truly understand redemption you need to have been at the bottom.

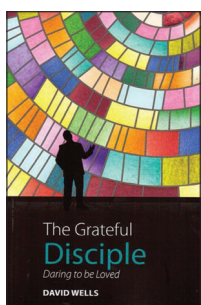
Sun 14 Jun CORPUS CHRISTI

Deuteronomy 8:2-3.14-16; Psalm 147; John 6:51-58

Just as bread and wine are changed into the Divine Presence so we, too, need to be changed into the substance of Christ. At communion, take your fate into your own hands and become what you eat and drink.

(KEY: **SOLEMNITY:** FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial) Dc=Deacon; D=Doctor; H=Hermit; Pr= Priest

Following on from his popular first book, *The Reluctant Disciple*, Wells offers more thought-provoking and inspirational insights into scripture, based on his own experience. With self-deprecating humour, David draws on his life as a teacher, speaker and family man to engage the reader in this his journey.



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