



## CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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Dear Parish Family,

Tomorrow is already August. The month of August is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of our Blessed Mother Mary. Below is a Novena prayer for this month:

*O Most Blessed Mother, heart of love, heart of mercy, ever listening, caring, consoling, hear our prayer. As your children, we implore your intercession with Jesus your Son. Receive with understanding and compassion our humble petitions.*

*We are comforted in knowing your heart is ever open to those who ask for your prayer. We trust to your gentle care and intercession, those whom we love and who are sick or lonely or hurting. Help all of us, Holy Mother, to bear our burdens in this life until we may share eternal life and peace with God forever. Amen.*

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart gives us an example of how to love the Holy Trinity as well as how to love our neighbor as ourself. During the month of August, let us pray for a deeper sharing in God's love in our lives and in our friend's lives.

August 15 is the Solemnity of the Assumption, which is the patronal feast day of the diocese of Saginaw. This year, because it falls on a Monday, the obligatory nature of this day is lifted - that is, it is not a holy day of obligation this year. Please pray during the days leading up to this day and on this day for our diocese, our bishop, and all the people of the diocese.

The Holy Father's prayer intentions for the month of August are that World Youth Day in Madrid may encourage young people throughout the world to have their lives rooted and built up in Christ; and that Christians may be open to the action of the Holy Spirit and rediscover the freshness and enthusiasm of their faith.

Sunday, July 31, is our business manager Marcia Huntoon's birthday. Please remember her in your prayers, and wish her a Happy Birthday! As they say in Latin, "ad multos annos" - or in English, "may you have many happy years!"

I hope you are using the remainder of your summer to grow in grace, and in the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. If you are on the road on the weekend, you can go to [www.masstimes.org](http://www.masstimes.org) and find a Catholic church. Please pray for each other, and for me. God bless you and keep you in His care!

Fr. David

## Sacred Signs and Symbols

## Sacred Vessels - Paten

One morning I had climbed a high hill and was turning around to go back. Below me, in the early light, ringed around with the silent hills, lay the lake, crystal clear. Great green trees bordered it with their nobly-sweeping boughs. The sky was high and spacious. The whole scene was so fresh, so clear, that a feeling of joy took possession of me. It was as if invisible noiseless fountains were shooting up into the bright, far, distance.

Then I came to understand how a we, with hearts overflowing, may stand with uplifted faces, and hands outspread like the shallow dish of the paten, and offer up to the Infinite Goodness, to the Father of lights, to God, Who is love, the world around Him and within Him, the silent world brimming over with life and light, and how it would seem to Him that that world, lifted up on the paten of His open hands, would be clean and holy.

Thus did Christ once stand on the spiritual mount and offer up to His Father the holocaust of His love and His life's breath. On a lower eminence of that same mountain, on the foothill of Mount Moriah, Abraham performed His sacrifice. And in the same spot before this the King and Priest Melchizadech had made expiation. In the self-same place, in the first age of the world, Abel's simple offering rose straight up to heaven.

That spiritual mountain still rises, and the hand of God is still stretched out above, and the gift mounts up every time a priest - not in his own person, since he is merely the instrument, of no value in itself - stands at the altar and raises in his outspread hands the paten with the white bread on it.

"Blessed are You, Lord, God of all creation. Through Your goodness we have this bread to offer. Which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the Bread of Life!"

-Romano Guardini

## MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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July 31, 2011

# GOD'S ANSWER TO HUMAN SUFFERING

The answer must be someone, not just something. For the problem (*suffering*) is about someone (*God — why does He... why doesn't He...?*) rather than just something. To question God's goodness is not just an intellectual experiment. It is rebellion or tears. It is a little child with tears in its eyes looking up at Daddy and weeping, "*Why?*" This is not merely the philosophers' "*why?*" Not only does it add the emotion of tears but also it is asked in the context of relationship. It is a question put to the Father, not a question asked in a vacuum.

The hurt child needs not so much explanations as reassurances. And that is what we get: the reassurance of the Father in the person of Jesus, "*whoever has seen Me has seen the Father*" (Jn 14:9).

The answer is not just a word but the Word; not an idea but a person. Clues are abstract, persons are concrete. Clues are signs; they signify something beyond themselves, something real. Our solution cannot be a mere idea, however true, profound, or useful, because that would be only another sign, another finger, another clue — like fingers pointing to other fingers, like having faith in faith, or hope in hope, or being in love with love. A hall of mirrors.

Besides being here, He is now. Besides being concretely real in our world, He, our answer, is also in our story, our history. Our story is also His-story. The answer is not a timeless truth but a once-for-all catastrophic event, as real as the stories in today's newspapers.

It is, of course, the most familiar, the most often-told story in the world. Yet it is also the strangest, and it has never lost its strangeness, its awe, and will not even in eternity, where angels tremble to gaze at things we yawn at. And however strange, it is the only key that fits the lock of our tortured lives and needs. We needed a surgeon, and He came and reached into our wounds with bloody hands. He didn't give us a placebo or a pill or good advice. He gave us Himself.

He came. He entered space and time and suffering. He came, like a lover. Love seeks above all intimacy, presence, togetherness. Not happiness. "*Better unhappy with her than happy without her*" — that is the word of a lover. He came. That is the salient fact, the towering truth, that alone keeps us from putting a bullet through our heads. He came. He did the most important thing and he gave the most important gift: Himself. It is a lover's gift. Out of our tears, our waiting, our darkness, our agonized aloneness, out of our weeping and wondering, out of our cry, "*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*" He came, all the way, right into that cry.

In coming into our world He came also into our suffering. He sits beside us in the stalled car in the roadside. Sometimes He starts the car for us, but even when He doesn't, He is there. That is the only thing that matters. Who cares about cars and success and miracles and long life when you have God sitting beside you? He sits beside us in the lowest places of our lives. Are we broken? He is broken with us. Are we rejected? Do people despise us not for our evil but for our good, or attempted good? He was "*despised and rejected of men.*" Do we weep? Is grief our familiar spirit, our horrifyingly familiar ghost? Do we ever say, "*Oh, no, not again! I can't take any more!*"? He was "*a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*" Do people misunderstand us, turn away

from us? They hid their faces from Him as from an outcast, a leper. Is our love betrayed? Are our tenderest relationships broken? He too loved and was betrayed by the ones He loved. "*He came unto His own and His own received Him not.*" Does it seem sometimes as if life has passed us by or cast us out, as if we are sinking into uselessness and oblivion? He sinks with us. He too is passed over by the world. His way of suffering love is rejected, His own followers often the most guilty of all; they have made His name a scandal, especially among His own chosen people.

How does He look upon us now? With continual sorrow, but never with scorn. We add to His wounds. There are nineteen hundred nails in His cross. We, His beloved and longed for and passionately desired, are constantly cold and correct and distant to Him. And still He keeps brooding over the world like a hen over an egg, like a mother who has had all of her beloved children turn against her. "*Could a mother desert her young? Even so I could not desert you.*" He sits beside us not only in our sufferings but even in our sins. He does not turn His face from us, however much we turn our face from Him. He endures our spiritual scabs and scars, our sneers and screams, our hatreds and haughtiness, just to be with us. With-ness — that is the word of love.

Does He descend into all our hells? Yes. Does He descend into violence? Yes, by suffering it and leaving us the solution that to this day only a few brave souls have dared to try — non-violence. Does He descend into insanity? Yes, into that darkness too. "*Even the darkness is not dark to Him.*" He finds or makes light even there, in the darkness of the mind.

For the darkest door of all has been shoved open and light from beyond it has streamed into our world to light our way, since He has changed the meaning of death. It is not merely that He rose from the dead, but that He changed the meaning of death, and therefore also of all the little deaths, all the sufferings that anticipate death and make up parts of it.

But He came into life and death, and He still comes. He is still here. "*As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me*" (Mt 25:40). He is here. He is in us and we are in Him; we are His body. He is the most forgotten soul in the world. He is the one we love to hate. He practices what He preaches: He turns His other cheek to our slaps. That is what love is, what love does, and what love receives.

Love is why He came. It's all love. The buzzing flies around the cross, the stroke of the Roman hammer as the nails tear into His flesh, the infinitely harder stroke of His own people's hammering hatred, hammering at His heart — why? For love. God is love, as the sun is fire and light, and He can no more stop loving than the sun can stop shining.

All our sufferings are transformable into His work, our passion into His action. Thus God's answer to the problem of suffering not only really happened 2,000 years ago, but it is still happening in our own lives. The solution to our suffering is our suffering! All our suffering can become part of His work, the greatest work ever done, the work of salvation, of helping to win for those we love eternal joy.

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