

“How Do We Deal with the Storms of Life?”

1. **Life can be difficult, sometimes overwhelming.** There are two possible ways to deal with it – either to turn in on ourselves, go in the spiritual hole of darkness & possible despair and numb ourselves with many different temporary fixes; or to turn to Jesus and beseech Him to help us – see the **Sacred Heart Devotion** – my bulletin column this weekend is all about that – check it out. St. Paul says today in the letter to the Corinthians, *“He (Jesus) indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”* Are we living for Jesus, now that we have received His very life in the Sacrament of Baptism and Holy Communion, as well as the other Sacraments of the Church? Every time we receive Holy Communion with faith and without mortal sin on our soul, we are making a pledge to Jesus to pour out our life in self-giving love for Him and for others. Are we doing that - with the help He gives us daily to do so, if we are open to it? **If Jesus and the Indwelling Trinity and the Catholic Faith is not at the center of our life, we won’t be able to deal with the storms very well, if at all** - *whatever they may be: family problems, relationship problems, health problems, frustrations of various sorts, a lack of ultimate meaning and purpose to our life, not being able to conceive a child, or find a suitable person to marry, spiritual trials of various sorts: trying to figure out our vocation in God’s plan esp. if it is to the priesthood or religious life, temptations of the flesh, struggling with the same sins over and over, or guilt from past sins, dryness in prayer, the feeling that God has abandoned us for some reason, etc.* Whatever it is - Jesus will calm the storm, eventually, if we let Him. Do we believe that? We need to pray daily for the gift of a deeper Faith. Is Jesus saying to us, as He said to the Apostles today in the Gospel - “Do you not yet have Faith?”
2. **Let’s be brutally honest here.** There are days in most of our lives where we would just like to give up or run away from it all. As we get older and spiritually mature, hopefully it’s less of a temptation, but we may still occasionally get

nailed by that spiritual darkness... The question is what do you do when your spouse, or children, or mother or father, or in-laws, or co-workers or neighbors are driving you insane? Or your job is awful seemingly day after day? Or as a priest when sometimes you deal with one dysfunctional situation after another and would like to scream or get in your car and drive far far away? Well, welcome to the storms of life! **What are we going to do when we are “down in a hole”, dealing with problems big and small?** *We can try to escape be it through alcohol, or drugs – legal or illegal, or pornography, or overeating, or by having an affair, or getting addicted to gambling or money or technology or television or smoking various substances; or maybe even closing our heart off to everyone around us because we have been hurt so many times, and worst case maybe even thinking of or attempting suicide.* That’s the way the devil wants us to deal with the storms of life. In contrast, **God** mysteriously allows us all to experience some or all of the above frustrations, difficulties, temptations and trials because He will use them to purify and mature us in His love - if we allow Him to calm the storms, in His own time and way. To form us into the image of Jesus - it’s all part of the mystery of the **Cross**, and the necessity of picking up our Cross daily and following Jesus if we want to walk on the narrow path that leads to salvation. **But we need to turn to Him in the storms or they will overwhelm us.**

3. **How do we do that?** By inviting Him in. It’s o.k. to say, *Lord I am teed off about all this crazy stuff I have to deal with in my life, but please help me.* As a priest I have the advantage of living next to the Church, so the thing that helps me the most is going over and **praying before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament** when I am having a bad day. It’s harder to do that as a lay person- outside of coming to **daily Mass** and **times of adoration**, which I encourage you to do. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a huge help in dealing with the storms of life - sometimes in just 5 or 10 minutes the cloud of darkness is lifted, and you feel released from the spiritual hole with a new perspective on things. Coming to daily Mass when you are having a rough couple of days is such a help. But if you can’t always come to those, you can always go off to a quiet place in your house; and if

that is not possible, go out for a walk or for a drive and pray from your heart. In my own life when I really have felt down and in the darkness, I often seek out a fellow priest and **make a good Confession** and going to the Sacrament of Confession often calms the storm, the healing grace of that Sacrament should never be underestimated. **Praying the Rosary**, which a wise person said is like a telephone call to our Lady, our Spiritual Mother, **and praying the Divine Mercy chaplet**, which is the modern form of the Sacred Heart Devotion, also are indispensable. **Reading the Bible**, especially the Gospels helps to put things in perspective, as well as **reading about the Lives of the Saints**. **Watching** the Catholic network: **E.W.T.N.** helps too, if you have cable/internet, especially for those of you who may not be big readers. Also **talking to your spiritual director or a good priest or a solid spiritual friend** can help a lot. Finally **doing something to help someone else** often lifts the cloud of darkness. But I'll again be honest: sometimes we do all these things, and still feel down in a hole, that we might be losing our soul; in those cases, we have to just hang on for dear life, pray, and keep asking God to bring us out of the storm in His time! He will! He always does eventually! God wants us to experience His new life of inner freedom, joy and peace. This doesn't mean all our trials are taken away when we give our hearts to Him; we continue to live in a sinful, imperfect, but ultimately redeemed world, which is the source of our hope as St. Paul says. He, Jesus, has truly won the victory over satan, sin and death. He wants to win that victory in our individual lives - that is why the storms have an ultimate purpose. He uses them to draw us deeper into His heart if we let Him. The **ultimate temptation** for all of us is to simply numb ourselves with temporary fixes of the passing, sometimes sinful, pleasures of this life, **so we simply exist day to day but don't really live.** There are too many people in that pit in our contemporary world. We are called to live for God as His new creation and to lead others into that new life by our words, example, and prayers. That will only happen if we **Trust Him.** **Yes, Trust Him- God will calm the storms of life in all their varied forms;** that when we are down in the hole, may we not lose our soul; but ask the Lord lead us on the narrow path to holiness which is ultimate life in Him. God bless you. †