

In September of 1966, I entered college, and when I went off to St. Gregory Seminary in Cincinnati my mom gave me a little gift which I still have to this day. It is a bronze figure of the Greek mythological character Sisyphus. Somehow Sisyphus had upset the gods and he was condemned to spend eternity pushing a huge stone up a hill. But always, just as he was reaching the top, the boulder would get away from him and roll back down the hill, and Sisyphus would have to start all over again. I guess mom thought that was what the seminary was going to be like for me. (She wasn't far from the mark!)

Most of us probably feel like Sisyphus sometime; some people feel like that *all* the time. Frustration gets to us. Job speaks powerfully for Sisyphus and all of us today: "Is not man's life on earth drudgery?" he asks. "My life is like the wind. I shall not see happiness again." He complained that there was no purpose or meaning to life.

That is probably overstating it somewhat. But we can look at all the ordinary things of our lives, like getting up in the morning, 8 or 10 or 12 hours working, a typical school day, three meals, watching television in the evening, going to bed to get enough strength to go through the same things again tomorrow. To some it can seem so boring, so meaningless.

And even more frustrating and absurd are disasters like wars and hurricanes and cancer and murders. Why?

**Faith Inventory:** "My feeling about God is:\_\_\_\_\_." The most common response to that is "He is the creator; he knows and loves me." But sometimes the response comes back "confused." When I pursued that, the answer was usually explained by a question like "How can a God who is good allow so much evil to

go on in the world? Why does God punish good people for things they cannot help or control?” We have all faced tragedies in our lives. And probably at those times we looked to God, not without faith, but with some frustration, and asked *why*? Why must good, innocent people die? Why must people suffer? Why must dozens of people die in a plane crash? Why, why, why? Is life worth living or not?

These sad things are hard to explain. But there *is* some reason for hope. This passage from Job is not the end of the story. We have only to look at today’s New Testament readings to see that. There was much suffering in Paul’s world and in his own life. But he answered that question about life being worth living, long before Fulton Sheen did. Paul said, “I do all that I do for the sake of the Gospel in the hope of having a share in its blessings.” Paul says that he made himself “all things to all people to save at least some of them.”

In other words, we may not be able to prevent tragedy, or stop senseless acts, but we, as individuals and as a community, can do much, as Paul did, to help those who feel pain and frustration. We can bring not only our human compassion, but the saving, healing love of Jesus Christ. We cannot cure mother-in-law’s fevers or cast our demons as he did. But we can heal in our own way. We can do it by allowing Jesus Christ to heal **us**, and then letting others see and share that peace. We can do it by caring, by giving of ourselves, by going out of our way, by being joyful people.

In his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis says that we must “choose to cultivate kindness.... Every now and then,” he says, “miraculously a kind person appears and is willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general

indifference. If we make a daily effort to do exactly this, we can create a healthy [world].” (223)

There are all kinds of people today who don’t know whether life is worth living, and *that is why we are around*. We must tell them that life **is** worth living and show them why. We must proclaim the **Good** News; we must help others discover life and value and purpose in the midst of suffering, frustration and struggle.

But redemption and healing from Jesus Christ does not mean that all evil will immediately stop. Boredom still goes on. Who can stop hurricanes and floods and earthquakes? Crime still makes the front pages of newspapers everyday. What redemption means is that **we take a stand against evil**. Evil should not be, but it is. Evil will diminish when enough human beings work together to eliminate it whenever and wherever it pops up.

It is our duty as men and women of faith to do what we can, to do what we must. But often what we *must* do seems beyond what we *can* do. The lives of Jesus and Paul seem like success stories far beyond us. Instead of lifting us up, their lives might depress us even more because we realize how far we are from them.

But Jesus stood for *trying* to do God’s will, his Father’s will. It didn’t always work out that way, even for him. See how many would not listen, how many would shout, “Crucify him!” But that did not stop him. He kept on all the way to the cross and glory. That is the answer for Job and for us. We must learn God’s will, and then we must stand and try to do it—not once, but twice and three times and forever. And that will bring *infinite* meaning to our lives.