

Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.

Parish Life! from OSV



News and resources for your parish

April 2007

Welcome to **Parish Life!** from Our Sunday Visitor. As a parish leader who has ordered from Our Sunday Visitor in the past, you're receiving this fourth edition of our special e-newsletter just for parishes!

Each month you'll find timely content, practical information, and insightful inspiration delivered right to your inbox. We'd love to hear from you as well, so please e-mail us with questions or topics you would like to see discussed in future editions: yyoung@osv.com.

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Feel free to forward this email to a friend who might be interested.

Tragic events raises serious questions by Joseph White

The recent killings at Virginia Tech profoundly affected our country. When such tragic events occur, we are forced to pause and consider serious questions about the value of life, the causes of violence, and the problem of human suffering. Is there any way to calculate the loss of one innocent life - to not only the individual's family but the human community? How could an individual be capable of such a senseless act of destruction?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church points out the difficulties these questions can pose even for Catholics:

"The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil, suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a

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On Fire for the Lord

Help your parish embrace the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday (May 27).

Encourage parishioners to wear fire colors - red, orange, hot pink - to Mass that Sunday. Setting the Church ablaze with bright colors will help get the message across about the Holy Spirit's power.

temptation against it" (No.164).

We may never have these questions answered fully for us during our time here on earth, but our faith can provide us with some comforts - and some insights. One thing we can know for sure is that God does not cause suffering in the world, nor does he will it for anyone. Suffering is a result of the imperfect state of our world, and suffering caused by acts of violence come from the misuse of free will. God gives us freedom to choose our actions so that we can freely choose to love. Good works would not truly be good if they were not done by choice. However, some choose evil instead of good.

We can also be certain of God's solidarity with those who are suffering. In his book "Crossing the Threshold of Hope," Pope John Paul II said, "God is always on the side of the suffering." We do not worship a God who is far away from us and detached from human pain. Rather, God became human in the person of Jesus Christ and took human suffering upon himself. He knows how it feels to suffer, and still suffers with us in our times of pain. He cries with us, and holds us in the palm of his hand.

Because we are all joined to Christ and to one another through baptism, we never suffer alone. In his discourse on the Mystical Body of Christ, St. Paul says, "If [one] part suffers; all the parts suffer with it" (1 Cor 12:26). When we suffer, we can take comfort in this truth, not just because Christ and the Church suffer with us, but also because being united with Christ means sharing in His resurrection.

As Christians, we might at times be called to suffer with Christ, even to bear crosses that seem excruciatingly heavy, but with every Good Friday comes the promise of an Easter Sunday. Although we see death, we believe in faith that we will see new life.

[Pray for one another](#)

What Good Can Come from This? by Lorene Hanley Duquin

How does the recent Virginia Tech tragedy affect us and our parishioners?

- When we wonder how God could allow this, our faith is tested. God allows bad things to happen because he has given us free will. But as people of faith we know that God also helps us to bring something good out of even the worst situations. St. Paul assures us that "all things work for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28).
- When we worry about whether this could happen again, our hope is tested. Senseless tragedies tempt us to negativity, fear and feelings of despair. Jesus assures us, however, that no matter how terrible things are, there is reason for hope. "In this world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33).
- When we struggle with feelings of anger or hatred toward the perpetrator, our ability to love is tested. Feelings of prejudice may surface. We may be tempted to judge the shooter harshly. But Jesus tells us that we must love everyone. "For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?" (Mt 5:46).

Perhaps God is calling us, through this tragedy, to be more inclusive of all people, to reach out to those who are lonely, to strengthen our youth ministry, to offer help to parents with difficult children, to put an end to bullying, to minister to the mentally ill, and to comfort the sorrowful.

Quick links!

- ▼ www.OSV.com
- ▼ Parish leaders' resources
- ▼ Q&A with Dr. Joseph White
- ▼ 7 Steps to Becoming Financially Free Small Group Study Program
- ▼ New VBS program: Great Bible Reef
- ▼ Register to win free programs and materials for YOUR parish

A good prayer to help ourselves and our parishioners deal with this tragedy is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The Holy Spirit's Offer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.



Processing senseless acts of violence

When the unthinkable happens, such as the shooting deaths of 32 people at Virginia Tech last month, it is easy to ask why and to harbor angry feelings against the perpetrator. Priests and chaplains who ministered to Columbine and Sept. 11 survivors advise otherwise, however. They tell Our Sunday Visitor's newsweekly that people should not fixate on the nonstop coverage of such tragedies, but rather go on with Christ in their life and seek out solace in the Church. For more of their guidance on grief, [click here to read "Shooting recalls Columbine, Sept. 11 tragedies"](#) by Carlos Briceno.

On Fire for the Lord

Frustration and suffering was not uncommon among many of those who would become saints. When things in the world seem to be going badly and despair takes hold, remember what many of the saints went through. Perhaps the model of hope is St. Monica, who prayed for the conversion of her son, Augustine, for 30 years. Augustine went on to become one of the great Fathers of the Church.

Don't even get close to burnout!

"People who work in ministry are often working in the very communities they rely upon for social and spiritual support, and the dual relationships that result can pose complications for their work and personal lives."

For ways to avoid approaching the burnout stage, reach "[Burnout Busters: Stress Management for Ministry](#)," by Joseph White (available from Our Sunday Visitor, call 1-800-348-2440 or [click here](#)).

Let us know what you think!

We hope you've enjoyed our Parish Life! newsletter! Let us know what you think--we appreciate your comments, questions, suggestions, and requests! Email yyoung@osv.com.

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