

Catholic Faith Corner

Understanding, Teaching, and Living the Faith

Sea of Galilee at Sunrise



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Lent: Meaningful Suffering

by KATHLEEN GLAVICH, SND on [FEBRUARY 13, 2013](#)
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Every year during Lent we recall that God as man was beaten, whipped, mocked, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross. Only the gift of faith enables us to believe the incredible: that the all-powerful God actually endured agony, suffered, and died for us. By his suffering, Jesus gave meaning to all of our suffering. When a young Sister, a friend of mine, was dying of cancer, I visited her every day during my lunch break. At the time, I was writing a textbook for high school seniors. My friend asked me to do some research and let her know if the Church still taught that we can put suffering to good use by offering it for an intention. Later, I was happy

to inform her that, yes, we can. As I left her room that day she said to me, "I offer my suffering today for you."

Suffering has always been a mystery. The Book of Job deals with it but provides no answer. No one is exempt from suffering. It comes in many forms: physical pain brought on by disease or by accidents, pain that is major or as minor as a paper cut. We also suffer mental anguish. Just ask a parent whose child is in trouble or in danger,



Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND

I'm a Sister of Notre Dame, of Chardon, Ohio, the author of eighty-plus books on religious education and spirituality, including a novel, "The Fisherman's Wife: The Gospel According to St. Peter's Spouse." I enjoy giving talks and retreats and was a pastoral associate at St. Dominic Church. I also edit and self-publish books for others.

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a sinner who regrets a serious sin, or a worker who cannot find a job or who is trapped in a thankless one, or someone who must put up with an irritating neighbor.

A popular book awhile back was *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. The author, a rabbi, struggled with the mystery of suffering. One concept that wasn't included in the book, of course, was the advantage we Christians have when we face suffering: the cross. We can unite our suffering with the sufferings of Jesus and that way have a hand in redeeming the world. The French dramatist Paul Claudel noted, "Jesus did not come to explain away suffering or remove it. He came to fill it with His presence."

We can also offer our suffering the same way that we offer our prayers. Our intention may be a relative who is in need, our own need, a Congress that makes progress, or peace in Syria. May we never let our suffering go to waste! St. John of the Cross once said, "Suffering for God is better than miracles." And St. Paul, who suffered much, said about it, "We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us." (Romans 5:1) Last but not least, accepting suffering patiently is a form of penance that can make up for our sins. In light of all its benefits, suffering has the potential to draw us closer to Christ. You might even say it is a gift.

For what intention can you offer up your suffering? Is there a sufferer you know who would benefit from knowing "the Christian secret"?

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About Sister Kathleen Glavich, SND

Jesus ordered us to make disciples of all nations and teach them. Mary Kathleen, a Sister of Notre Dame from Chardon, Ohio, responds to this call through writing, speaking, giving retreats, and teaching. Her motto, adopted from Eddie Doherty's gravesite, is "All my words for the Word!"

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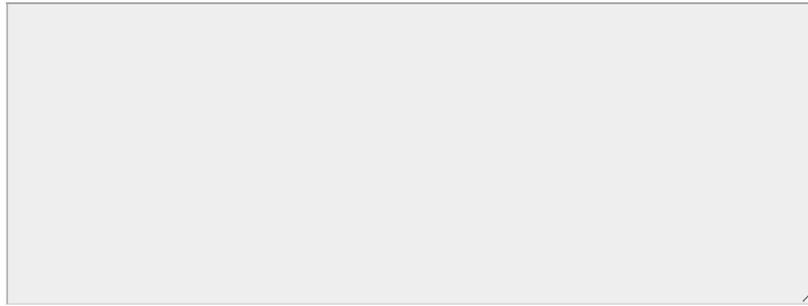
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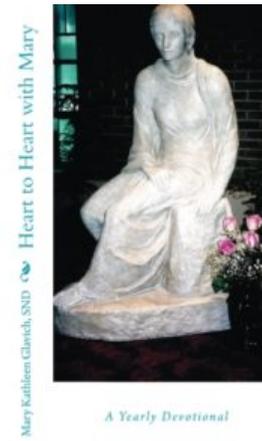
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Featured Book

Totally Catholic! A Catechism for Kids and Their Parents and Teachers

Do you wish you had a simple, child-friendly summary of what Catholics believe? This book took first place in the Association of Catholic Publishers awards 2014 in the category of Children's Books. It can be purchased from Pauline Books and Media or from me. (\$14.95)

A Heavenly Book

Do you believe in angels? Most people do. The Catholic Companion to Angels offers heavenly facts about these majestic creatures, confirming that you can turn to them for help. Uniquely, The Angels comes with three covers (statue, stained-glass, or painting). Choose the one you like best.

Available from ACTA Publications and me.
(\$10.00)

My First Novel!

The Fisherman's Wife is the story of St. Peter's spouse, the long-suffering but delightful woman who puts up with Peter and his obsession with the itinerant preacher named Jesus. Through her we meet Peter, Jesus, and other biblical characters. In Capernaum she witnesses Jesus' healings and hears his words. The book is based on the Gospels, legends, and what is known about first-century Jewish women. The rest is sheer imagination. Order directly from me FOR AN AUTOGRAPHED COPY at kglavich@ndec.org.

A Bit of Humor

A Slow Student During indoor recess, the third and fourth graders were playing school. Taking part in the game, the teacher, Sister Janet, sat at a child's desk. Adam, who was playing the teacher, came up to her and asked, "And just how many years have you been kept back?" (from "Why Is Jesus in the Microwave?")

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