

Argentine Prisoner

Readings

Is 55:1-3; Rom 8:35, 37-39; Mt 14:13-21

God often uses our tragedies and trials to make us into better people. Not long ago a woman reporter interviewed a young man from Argentina. He had been held prisoner by the military government there for six years without trial. During this time the young man was tortured and was subjected to long hours in solitary confinement. The interviewer asked him if he was bitter about his suffering and the loss of six years of his life. He surprised her, saying, "I don't regard those six years as lost. I took advantage of them to strengthen my character and to deepen my relationship with God."

The young man's response illustrates beautifully what Paul talks about in today's reading. He writes: "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution or peril?" Then Paul answers his own question, saying: "Neither death, nor powers, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Some of the most beautiful music in our world has come from people who have been seasoned by suffering, by tragedies, and by trials.

For example, Handel wrote his famous "Hallelujah Chorus" when he was poverty-stricken and suffering from a paralyzed right side and right arm.

Beethoven was the son of an alcoholic father. He also lost his hearing at the age of 28. And when he conducted the first performance of his Ninth Symphony, he couldn't hear the music as it was played. Nor could he hear the thunderous applause that followed the performance.

There's a moving scene toward the end of the movie *Little Big Man*. An elderly Indian named Old Lodgeskins, has long lost his bodily health and his eyesight. And as he prepares for death, he prays to God in words something like this:

"Lord God, I thank you for having made me a human being. I thank you for giving me life and for giving me eyes to see and enjoy your world. "But most of all, Lord, I thank you for my sickness and my blindness, because I have learned more from these than from my health and my sight."

This brings us back to our opening story about the young man in the Argentine prison. He was able to grow in his relationship to God and as a person, in spite of an awful situation. He could do this because he chose to open his heart to God and to accept whatever God gave him. And he did this without growing bitter, without feeling sorry for himself, without complaining.

If God is to use the trials and the tragedies of our lives to help us grow in our relationship with him and as persons, we must open our hearts totally to God.

The important thing is the open heart.
The important thing is the trusting heart.
The important thing is the believing heart.
The important thing is the loving heart.

There are lots of pages in the book of life that are hard to understand. All we can do is fold them down and write, "The teacher says to leave this now, tis' hard to understand." Then, someday, perhaps only in heaven, we will unfold the pages again, read them, and say, "The teacher was right, now I understand".

When you encounter sorrows and pain, when you face hardships, as you have and will again.

When your heart is open, when your heart is trusting, when your heart is believing, when your heart is loving,

Then you will know that-----

You are loved.

Deacon Dan