

A Message from Fr. Roberto

Hurricanes, Earthquakes, Fires...Where Are You, God?

With all the calamities going on in our world, the question above can easily pop into our minds. It can seem that God is absent, unconcerned or even that God does not exist. As I mentioned last week in my bulletin message, God does not cause evil and God does not punish us, so none of these natural disasters is a punishment from God. Rather, they are simply part of the price we pay for living in an imperfect world. We are told in Genesis that the world is beautiful and good; but it is still imperfect. Our human bodies are amazing organisms; yet our bodies and genes are imperfect. So babies are sometimes born with inexplicable imperfections and people



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<http://a57.foxnews.com/images.foxnews.com/content/fox->

sometimes get sick with cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's and other terrible diseases simply because our imperfect bodies are susceptible to them.

This world and this life are not perfect because they are not supposed to be. Only in heaven will we – and all of creation – find perfection: *“For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope”* (Romans 8:19-20). In the meantime, God accepts the imperfect natural laws

that guide this imperfect universe, world and our bodies, and we must live with them as best we can.

A few years ago, I read a very insightful and challenging book with the irreverent title, *“Where the Hell Is God?”* by a Jesuit priest named Fr. Richard Leonard, SJ (Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ: 2010). He has some very good insights that I hope we find helpful at this time as well as at other difficult moments in our lives. Fr. Leonard, in the preface of his book, gives a list of what he calls “seven steps to spiritual sanity when we are tempted and we give in to the temptation to ask, ‘Where the hell is God?’”

1. God does not directly send pain, suffering, and disease. God does not punish us.
2. God does not send accidents to teach us things, though we can learn from them.
3. God does not will earthquakes, floods, droughts, or other natural disasters. Prayer asks God to change us to change the world.
4. God's will is more in the big picture than in the small.
5. God did not need the blood of Jesus. Jesus did not just come "to die," but God used his death to announce the end to death.

6. God has created a world that is less than perfect, and in which suffering, disease, and pain are realities; otherwise, it would be heaven. Some of these problems we now create for ourselves and blame God.
7. God does not kill us off.

So what does God do when terrible things happen to us and to our world? I really believe that God suffers with us. Jesus is right there crying with us, holding us, consoling us and strengthening us. That is the kind of God we have.

Heaven's Surprise

Here is a copy of the poem I read in my homily last weekend.

Heaven's Surprise

I was shocked, confused, bewildered
as I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all,
by the lights or its decor.

But it was the folks in Heaven
who made me sputter and gasp--
the thieves, the liars, the sinners,
the alcoholics, the trash.

There stood the kid from seventh grade
who swiped my lunch money twice.
Next to him was my old neighbor
who never said anything nice.

Herb, who I always thought
was rotting away in hell,
was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
looking incredibly well.

I nudged Jesus, "What's the deal?
I would love to hear your take.
How'd all these sinners get up here?
God must've made a mistake.

And why's everyone so quiet,
so somber? Give me a clue."
"Hush, child," said He. "They're all in shock.
No one thought they'd be seeing you."