

At Your Service

PERMANENT DIACONATE

Would you be grateful to someone who got you to the emergency room when you needed it? Would you drop everything to take someone you love to the emergency room, or at least to dial 911? We would all say yes and yes! If you love the person you are in a relationship with, you want her to be happy and to do that you want to remove all suffering from her life. It is the common human experience that we all desire happiness and we all desire to avoid suffering.

Suffering can come from many different sources: physical, moral, emotional, and spiritual. The spiritual suffering that accompanies sin is the strongest and most painful kind because it causes pain in our soul. When we sin, we choose to turn away from a relationship with God, who is all good and all loving. Having a good relationship with God results in our true happiness and so to turn away from that relationship will only result in our suffering. Just as we suffer physically when our leg is broken, because the leg is no longer healthy, we suffer in our soul when we sin because our soul is no longer in good health.

In His unconditional love, God does not leave us alone in our suffering. God continues to love us even after we reject his love through sin. Jesus Christ suffered on the cross for us in order to end our suffering. Not only was Jesus' suffering on the cross His greatest act of mercy by which he ended our suffering, but He also restored us to a good relationship with God! As Blessed John Paul II said in his encyclical, *Rich in Mercy*, "Mercy does not consist only in looking, however penetratingly and compassionately, at moral, physical or material evil: mercy is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and draws good from all the forms of evil existing in the world and in man" (*Rich in Mercy*, no. 6).

Just like doctors mercifully heal our bodies to stop physical suffering, Jesus is the merciful doctor of the soul. The mission of God's mercy is to look for suffering and overcome it by restoring the good that has been damaged. He restores the good by uniting us ever more closely to Himself in a healthy relationship not damaged by sin.

Today, Jesus continues to heal our spiritual suffering in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He waits for us there and greets us in the person of the priest. Will you go to the Doctor of your soul and let His mercy overcome your suffering? Will you invite a friend to go with you so that you can share the happiness of being restored to a good relationship with God? Something that we can do every day to check our spiritual health is to do a daily examination of conscience followed by an Act of Contrition. May God help us turn away from sin, so that we can turn to God in an ever-deeper relationship of love!

Q. What spiritual sickness do you have that causes you suffering?

Q. Do you go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation as to a doctor who mercifully desires to heal you, remove your suffering, and restore you to happiness?

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