



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop  
Michael Jackels

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**Pondering why God sometimes doesn't answer prayers amid suffering**

There's so much hurt in the world. Big, ugly hurting, like people being forced to leave their homeland in search of safety and shelter, food and water, work and fair wages, education and healthcare – all the things needed to live in human dignity.

There are also the more day-to-day hurts, for example, people not feeling well either physically, mentally, or spiritually.

How great is the need for the healing of the earth, countries, families, relationships, and of body, mind, or soul!!!

And so we pray to God for healing, moved by the teaching and example of Jesus. So much of his public ministry was devoted to healing, surely God will heal now?

As much evidence as there is of how God answers prayers for healing, there's just as much of how God says "no" or "not now, maybe later." Why?

The silence of God sometimes makes us feel sorry for ourselves, or to murmur against God, maybe even decide to walk with God no more.

And it doesn't help matters when people suggest that the hurt, whatever it is, should be seen as God's punishment for sin.

But one of the lessons of the Bible, especially the Book of Job, is that while some suffering might be punishment for sin, that doesn't cover every circumstance.

My own little experience with a puny sort of suffering (I can't handle much) has led me to ask: if not as punishment, then why? Some possibilities I came up with are that maybe God wants...

... To teach us that we are not God, not in control

... To teach us how to fall, for that's the way to learn how to get back up again

... To teach us how to appreciate sweet, for example, from the experience of sour

... To toughen us up, make us stronger, even healthier by the buffeting of suffering

... To wake us up to smell the roses – start living life, as this might be the last day!

... To open our eyes to others' suffering, and our hearts to help them

... To identify with Jesus, who was innocent, yet silently endured suffering to save us

... Or to learn comfort with mystery: I don't know everything, can't know everything, and understand even less, and that's okay.

And when my head doesn't help deal with the hurt, I turn my heart to the cross of Christ, affirming that if love is the only explanation for that, then what else can be behind my littler cross?

Knowing that Divine Love is behind my suffering may not take the pain away, but it does take away the burden of it, or makes it sweet.

Looking at suffering through the filter of the cross of Christ, we ponder the possible reasons why God hasn't answered prayers for healing, arriving at peace, saying: this is the hand of God, out of love, for my need.

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