

[MAL 3:19-20A](#); [2 THESS 3:7-12](#); [LK 21:5-19](#)

*Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/111719.cfm>*

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*By your perseverance you will secure your lives."*

It's your perseverance in the Lord in which you are saved. We do not do so on our own, but by the power and grace of God. It is by his love for us that we are able to love each other.

God, by virtue of creating us in his own image, has given us the free will to reject his saving grace. He allows us to choose the other. He allows us to choose not to persevere, to go our own way.

But through his prophet Malachi, God warns us of the future we choose when we do not choose God. There are natural consequences... eternal consequences that include blazing ovens, burned stubble and fire that consumes root and branch. That is an image that goes beyond mere death. That is what it means to perish.

To persevere with the Lord, we pass through great trial. Our faith does not promise a life of ease and comfort as a reward for fidelity. Our faith speaks to a fallen world of sin and suffering. Our faith speaks of hope and consolation through and during our suffering.

Certainly, the suffering of the innocent offends our sense of divine justice. It is beyond not fair. But we follow the Innocent One who suffered pain, doubt and abandonment for our sake, so that we could be rescued for the Kingdom of God.

When we behold Jesus' agony in the Garden, we need to acknowledge the real agony before we appreciate Jesus' perseverance in his Father's will. We have confidence, that as God provided an angel to strengthen Jesus in the Garden, that He will provide for us as we persevere in faith.

This could be mere platitude if we had not experienced real pain and real suffering of our own.

A priest I know shared just such a crisis for him. He was prayerfully accompanying a family whose child was battling cancer. The battle lasted for months. The parish upheld the family in constant prayer. Our good priest accompanied the family through each dashed hope and each revived hope, keeping the family close to the sacraments and the love of God.

The child succumbed to the disease. The heartbreak was deep for the family and the parish was rocked with grief. Our priest was shaken. His trust in the love of God was questioned. How could such evil be allowed to take one so innocent? As in the agony of the Garden, God sustained our good priest and our stricken family.

I don't know if anyone not Catholic could understand how deeply our priests love and care for us. Following Jesus' example, they offer their hearts fully to us, choosing to enter into the agony of the Garden with full realization of what may come. May we share that love and care with each other and may we be to our priests as the angel was to Jesus in Gethsemane.

Through such tragedies, grief and sorrow may remain. But they are kept and remembered in context of the greater hope and assurance of our divine destiny, that for which we were made.

Our child died to this life, but he did not perish. While way too early in our earthly estimation, he has gone before us in our eternal destiny.

In this life, he was a walking testimony to hope and joy in the Lord. This little one left a legacy to his parish family. We were fortified by his perseverance in the Lord as we continue to face our own trials.

We have little knowledge of what awaits us. We are warned that it could include persecutions, seizures and even death. This gloomy foreboding is not the last word. It is with faith and hope that we walk through this valley of tears aware that Jesus walks with us every step.

We are encouraged by what awaits us as we heard in today's psalm where we hear melody and harp, trumpet and horn and joyful song where even the sea sounds off, the rivers clap and the mountains shout for joy. This is what awaits us who persevere in the Lord.

It is through the Lord's death and resurrection, that we arise from our suffering into new life.

It's your perseverance in His cross. It's your perseverance in his resurrection. It's your perseverance in the very life of God.

We are so thankful that we can come together in communion with Jesus Christ at his altar. By joining in his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, we shall never perish.

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