



Seeking Healing By Bishop Edward Rice

Infertility Mass 2014

Today is the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes – the Shrine known for its healing properties. People go to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes seeking healing for physical or spiritual problems. Over the years there have been a rather large number of miracles submitted to Rome for documentation, but actually the number of authenticated miracles is much smaller. There is a great wisdom in the Church. The Church proceeds cautiously, never wanting to be premature in declaring something to be a miracle. The last thing that we would want is for a miracle to be viewed years later, and to be discovered that it wasn't a miracle at all - it was rather misguided, and that could possibly maybe hurt people's faith.

What cannot be calculated are the spiritual miracles that occur. I recently knew of a family that went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes seeking a physical healing for a young teenager, but that did not occur. She did come back with a spiritual miracle – true peace in her heart. And before she died, she came to accept that her life was in the hands of God.

This side of heaven, it's difficult to comprehend God's plan. But whether it be physical or spiritual or emotional issues, we all belong to the Body of Christ. And our illnesses however defined, are always seen in the Light of the Cross. As we gather here this evening for this Mass, infertility is a cross at times that many are called to carry. And in doing so, you witness to the crucified Christ and to the power of his love on the Cross. We live in an age of contradiction. We live in an age where we have abortion on demand, and where couples are choosing to not have children. And yet, we have couples who are dealing with infertility, who desire to have children. You are in a very painful and yet poignant way, a witness to the sanctity of life.

And for some of you, to discern if you may be called to the experience of being foster parents or maybe even adoption. The important thing to remember is you are called to witness to the importance of love. Because if not, your cross can become bitter. My old associate when I was at St. John the Baptist used to say, that the things that happen to us in life, the things we cannot calculate, the things that we do not expect, can make us either bitter or better. The choice is ours.

St. John Newman, in his reflection called, "Learning Christ," wrote the following thoughts: *Teach me, my Lord, to be sweet and gentle. Teach me to profit by the suffering that comes across my path. Let me so use it that it may mellow me, and not harden or embitter me. That it may make me patient, not irritable. That it make me broad in my forgiveness, not narrow, haughty or overbearing.*

As we gather here tonight under the shadow of the cross, we are literally under the shadow of the cross. For four years, I walked into this chapel when it was still our seminary, and oftentimes I forgot the cross suspended high above us. I often thought it was too high because it was easy to ignore it. But as we are



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gathered here now, we are under the shadow of the cross. And, for some of you, your cross is infertility. But remember, that when we gather under the shadow of the cross, it is the sign of our salvation, the sign of victory.

There's another reflection that I would like to share with you, that hopefully might give some meaning to maybe your confusion as you deal with this issue. It's a reflection from Thomas Merton, the great Trappist monk. It's entitled, "I Have No Idea Where I Am Going," and even the very title might resonate with some of you. He writes, *My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will, does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that my desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may not know anything about it. Therefore, will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us!



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