

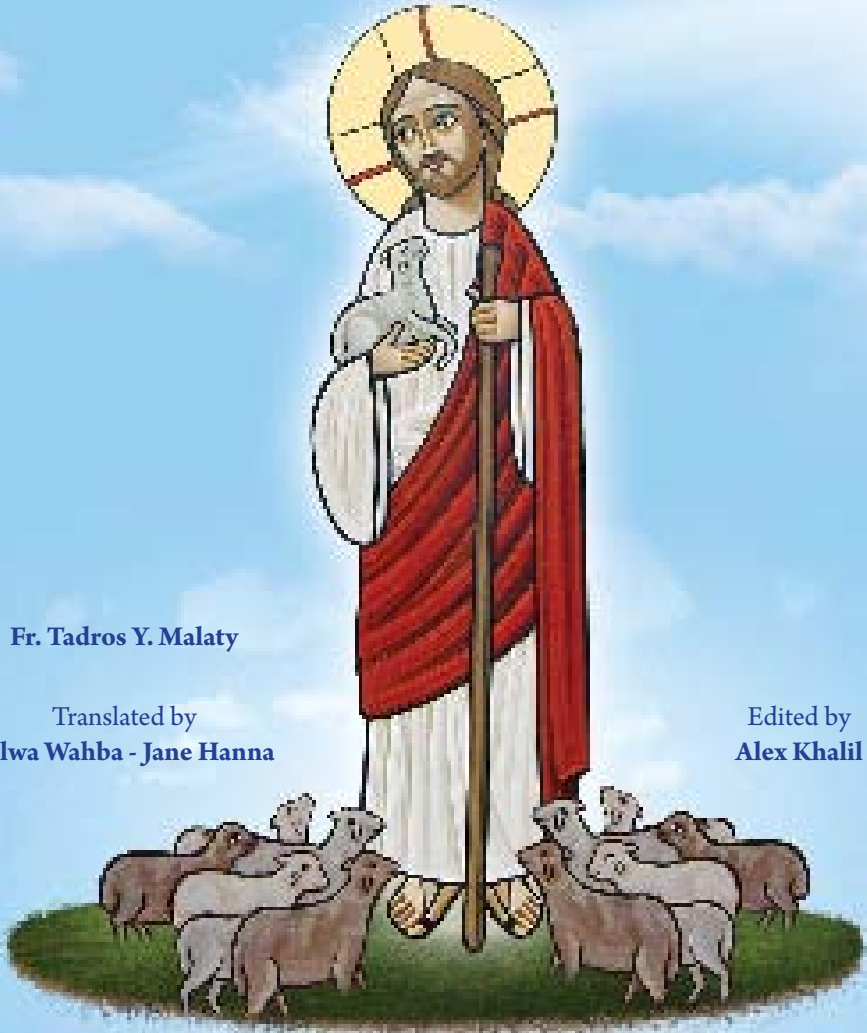


Questions that Puzzle the Youth  
**Where is the  
Divine Justice?**

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During the course of this month, I met with some of young people who were struggling with their faith. They had questions that were raised by atheists who doubt God's existence or His care for humanity.

Questions such as:

1. Why are there natural disasters, like draughts, earthquakes, and volcanoes that sometimes destroy millions of innocent people, especially young children?
2. Where is God's justice when a child is born inheriting dangerous diseases, poverty, or a cruel nature from his parents for no reason, while another child is born healthy, wealthy and with exceeding social and cultural capabilities?
3. What is the guilt of a child that was born handicapped?
4. Where is God's care when children lose their parents in accidents or because of diseases?
5. Where is God's care for those who are suffering bitter pains from diseases like AIDS, cancer, or other serious disease?
6. What is the guilt of a cruel or a violent person that became so for no other reason but his neuronal disease?
7. Why doesn't God destroy the evil spirits that ruin many people's lives?
8. Why doesn't God take away evil from the world so that everybody would live in a healthy quiet environment?

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Some people think that with such questions they can destroy the cornerstones of faith in God and every religious view of God's justice and divine care, but they are ignoring the following facts:

### **OUR TEMPORAL AND LITERAL REALITY**

When someone suffers from the bitterness of pain, the world becomes dark in his eyes, and he feels deserted by everybody, even his closest ones –his parents or his partner - as if they do not share his pain or feel his bitterness. Then, he looks up and may he find God that will listen to him and take away his pain. As he thinks that God does not hear him, he cries:

1. 1. Where is the divine justice?
2. 2. Why does God isolate Himself in His heavens, leaving us here on earth moaning all the time?
3. 3. Why doesn't He feel our weakness and share us our pain?
4. 4. Why does He allow things to get out of control, governed by cruel fate, making us live like toys in the hands of mere coincidence?

The secret behind these cries is that we weigh and measure things differently from God and our views are different from His. Man is a limited being in his capabilities and age, and thus is completely absorbed in the temporal life, being his reality that he does not exceed. Thus, he seeks to grab every temporal lust and

happiness, saying: "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die!"

On the other hand, the view of the unlimited God towards man is greater than him being just one among the millions of earthly beings, living for some time till he dies and perishes; rather, he is a child of God, whom He wants to be lifted up to His heavens, so that he would live with Him above times, exchanging with Him unlimited love and experiencing the partnership of the eternal saturating glories.

God has created man as a body and soul to live on earth, fulfilling his physical and psychological needs in this real, but temporary, life. Yet, He crosses with him to another eternal reality, where he will receive heavenly glories that both the body and the soul will enjoy.

Through this eternal real look, our sufferings, no matter how severe they are or how long they take, would become like passing instances on a road that prepares us for glory. Therefore, when St. Paul talked about faith as a way for looking forward towards our heavenly home, he said: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac... By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:17-25), as if by looking upon the heavens, the men of faith have joyfully accepted pain and sufferings. But nowadays, the materialistic look has prevailed in the





world, obscuring the heavens from humanity's eyes, so that with a narrowed heart they became fed by the earth, feeling bitterness, and despair instead of accepting pain with the spirit of strength and victory, rejoicing from inside, and being lifted above all painful timely events.

I knew a person in Australia, whom the doctors have asked to manage his family's affairs within the following two weeks, because the cancer tumors have exacerbated inside him. I lived his last few days on earth with him and I never saw anything on his face but honest happiness that was coming from a heart that is filled with peace. He did not tremble before the ascendancy of the disease, nor did he fear death or was disturbed for his young wife or his two little daughters. Rather, he used to repeat unto me: "I am fortunate that God has allowed me this illness, so that I would prepare myself. I am yearning to see my Christ."

St. Paul says: "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

With the birth of Christ – the suffering Messiah – all children of Bethlehem and its surroundings were exposed to unfair killings, while their mothers have cried and refused to be comforted (Matthew 2:18). However, as time passes quickly, we will meet with this parade, where the murdered children are enjoying the participation in the glory of the heavenly Messiah. It is just moments and the time will pass, making our sufferings become a deposit of glory in our eternal account.

## MAN'S ROLE IN THE PROBLEM OF PAIN



Many times man blames God for the pain that the humanity is suffering from, ignoring his role in creating much of this pain and the capabilities that he was given to turn this pain into constructive energies. For example:

- A. The world is bitterly crying from the widespread of the AIDS disease, which causes societies some uncountable losses in their human energies and financial capabilities. But who has brought this disease? Some believe man's persistence on his right to practice homosexuality, which God and even nature itself has warned us against? Isn't the humanity that is suffering from famines in great need of the huge amounts money that the world is paying for corruption? Every sick person with AIDS costs the hospital in New York \$13,400 and in San Francisco between \$25,000 and \$32,000. In 1991, the total cost of AIDS in America as a whole was \$16 million, in addition to the state of terror that was spread around the world from this wild beast.
- B. Countries spend billions of dollars on weapons, nuclear researches, etc., while millions of people are suffering from pains that are actually man-made. In addition, some scientists believe that the nuclear experiments are threatening to change the climate in vast areas of the earth, causing us to lose much of our food resources through draughts or floods. There is another theory that states that these experiments,



which are made in the South Pole (Antarctica) where the ice covers 95% of its area, a size that exceeds the area of Europe, will cause melting of the ice and its rush towards the ocean. This, in turn, will cause the water of the seas all over the world to elevate by 20 feet, producing universal flooding, and swamping vast parts of the coastal and the food areas of the world. Another theory claims that these experiments cause the rush of ice blocks towards the ocean, where they become like an ice gown reflecting the sun rays towards space. Thus, the earth will be deprived of the energy of the sun and its atmosphere will suffer from severe coldness, causing the snowy weather to extend from the South Pole to the rest of the earth and leading to a new ice age on earth. This destruction is man-made!

Indeed, God allows for natural disasters, yet it was comely for man to be united and loving, but many carry selfishness instead of love. In one society, maybe even in one family, we find some dying of hunger while others are suffering the bitterness of extravagant luxury.

### **SANCTIFYING HUMAN FREEDOM**

Some people oppose the existence of the divine care for the existence of evil in the world, saying: "What is the guilt of the oppressed that is suffering from the unfairness of an evil person?" Those people are ignoring the greatest gift that God has offered to man, that is "human freedom." God has given us the right of choice in everything, even



in our accepting or opposing Him. He does not want man to be a machine that God moves to realize His will, but rather He wants him to be a sensible creature that is capable of making decisions from his own inspirations.

Some may abuse this freedom, taking the course of evil and using violence against others. Yet, for His exceeding love to man, God leaves them free to do what they want, but in His justness He will recompense every man in time according to his deeds. He leaves the evil person in his evilness lest he repents and returns to Him that he might be rewarded. Yet, if he indulged himself in his evilness, he will definitely drink from the same cup that he has filled. God who will turn the unjustness to his benefit, unless he fell under this oppression as a fruit of his persistence on some hidden evil, on the other hand, will embrace the oppressed.

I remember that in our generation a man was sentenced to death for killing someone. When he met with a priest to confess before his execution, he said: "I deserve to be executed. Years ago I have killed and hid my crime, and what I am reaping now is the fruit of my hidden evil that only God knew about."

### **PAIN AND PERSONAL GROWTH**

Definitely, pain is bitter and detested, and it sometimes destroys man completely; but the destruction does not come from the pain itself. Rather, it comes from man's character that wants to live an easy spoilt life and not on the narrow road of the cross (Matthew 7:13-14).



Pain, for the serious person, is a “philosophical school,” where the soul grows and the personality is refined so that man would live in continuous development through the experience of weariness and troubles. St. John Chrysostom, the man of sufferings, said: “Pain is our teacher. We do not bring pain to ourselves, but we courageously bear it when we come across it, because it is always the source of much goodness.” “This life is a training camp (on pain), a battle, and a crucible where virtue is melted and purified.” “Just as the severity of the wind makes the oak trees stronger and tougher, the pure saint spirit, like the blessed Job’s, would not tremble before the attacks of pain, rather its patience is strengthened.” “Do not hope for a life that is free from pain, for it is for your own good.”

There is a huge difference between a spoiled young man that chooses the easy way and another that is being sophisticated by distress and refined by pain. I honestly believe that the first, even in the midst of his pleasures, does not feel the taste of life, while the second matures through his pains and experiences life so as to become a pillar that can support many people.

### **OUR SUFFERING IN THE SCALES**

Some may ask: “Why does God allow evil people to rape innocent children? And why did He allow – as it came in the history books – some evil leaders to violently rape virgin nuns?”



Raping is definitely extremely bitter for an innocent person that seeks to practice his free humanity, but God, in His honoring the freedom of man, does not forcibly prevent the evil people from their wickedness. As for the raped, they are chaste in God’s eyes, and are rather rewarded for the bitterness of their souls and for their love for purity and chasteness. Indeed, those people lose their external chasteness, are hurt in their human pride, and become psychologically disturbed, but God who sees the hidden things does not ignore them.

### **PAIN AND THE INHERITED NATURE**

What is the favor of a man that is quiet by nature?

And what is the guild of another whose nature is rough?

One is by nature silent from his childhood and the other loves to talk! A man, by nature, does not notice others’ faults, while another has a keen look towards every behavior around him! Where is the divine justice when judging people with such different natures that are usually not of their own making?

These questions reveal that we do not understand the concept of “the better life.” In His love for mankind, God does not make everyone the same; rather the beauty of His people resides in their variety and diversity that is in harmony and unity through spirit of love. God has allowed each and every one to have his own natural disposition, so that he would have a distinct personality from others. In this way every member will respect the others, considering them his complementing members who are not averse from him despite their different natures.





God glorifies the quiet person so that he would testify with his quietness in the Lord for the live biblical life; while, at the same time, He redeems the rough person in order to make an affirmed and resolute person out of him that is capable of leadership, but with love and an open heart without hurting others' feelings.

The silent person testifies with his silence if it was holy, while the talker speaks with the truth. Even anger can be a blessing if we are angry at ourselves against sin, and not against the sinners!

St. Augustine believes that, even the lusts, the Spirit of God is capable of sanctifying the feelings and emotions, without which we cannot love God or the people.

In other words, every nature in man can be constructive, if it is sanctified with the Spirit of God that is working in His Church, while if it is abused, it will become destructive. Likewise, if quietness is misused, it can be destructive. St. Augustine says: "Sometimes our dissimulated quietness and our silence that is coming from a dry heart can slap even harder than can our hands"!

### **PAIN AND THE NEURONAL DISEASES**

What is the guilt of a man that becomes furious towards another, unconsciously cursing or hitting him, because he is suffering from a neuronal disease?

I believe that God's judgment, for He inspects the hearts and knows man's abilities and capabilities, differs completely from our human judgment: "for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).



### **THE PAIN AND THE SURRENDERING**

Some people think that being religious means surrendering and submission, where we accept the pain and stop bemoaning our circumstances. However, this way man loses his liveliness and his struggle to reach a better state!

We have to differentiate between surrendering and acceptance. The first is a state of submission that is accompanied by despair and carelessness, while the second is accepting the pain open-heartedly, trusting in God's strong, and caring fatherly hand that turns the pain into goodness. Thus, the greater the pain, the more the believer doubles the struggling with live faith for the sake of God's kingdom and the construction of himself and others, even his tormenters.

With strength and experience, St. Paul says and in the midst of his pain: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:7-10).

Was St. Paul succumbed when he stood in bonds before King Agrippa who was sitting in the front of the congregation, giving the apostle the permission to speak? The king has said: "Almost you persuade me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).



Who was stronger, King Nebuchadnezzar who has cast the three men into the fiery furnace or the three men themselves? He said: “Look! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:25); as if the fourth was our Christ who has considered Himself tied up with those who are tied up, but He destroyed the ties and appeared with them and with all the loosed.

Our submission into the hands of the Great One is enjoying His capabilities and abilities. It is not surrendering or weakness.

### **FEELING DISTRESSED**

Pain is bitter and cruel; yet the heart of the believer that is united with his suffering Christ gets filled up with the divine love, so that he would love God and the people as his heart does not get bothered by anyone. He suffers, but he finds his inner comfort deep inside him, where he carries his Christ who grants him a new point of view towards life.

St. John Chrysostom was exiled, but what did the exile do to him? He considered it as visiting more new counties and cities. The devil fought with him, yet he considered it useful unto himself, for without it how could he fight, prevail, and get crowned? When death approached him, he considered it as a deep sleep, as resting and a departure unto the port, as a cross-over from one homeland to another, and as a migration from earth to heaven.



### **THE PAIN AND THE CROSS**

Our Christ did not take away the pain from the world, but when He came to the world, He drank the cup of pain and – in His love – shared our sufferings with us. Thus, suffering has become for us, not a sign of the divine anger or God’s abandoning, rather a participation of love. As our Christ has suffered for His love for the world, He allows us to suffer with Him as a sign of love, glory, and strength. St. John Chrysostom said: “What happiness can come upon us to become partners with Christ and to suffer for His sake?! How glorified is pain, for with it we resemble His death!” In his comments over St. Paul’s words: “For to you it is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29), he said: “He teaches us that pain is a blessing on behalf of Christ; it is a free gift of grace. Do not be ashamed of this gift of grace, for it is more wondrous than the power of raising the dead or making miracles happen.”







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