



# *Pastor's Column*

*St. Peter Catholic Church*

*February 3, 2019 ~ Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

## *Pointless Suffering*

Question: "Why would a good God allow innocent people to suffer and die with no clear purpose? Why is there pointless suffering?"

Answer: God can bring good from evil and can more than compensate for our sufferings and loss.

The faculties that allow suffering (such as the pain receptors in our nervous systems) have a purpose, which is to help us avoid danger. But sometimes they are triggered in situations where they do not help, resulting in apparently pointless suffering.

Fortunately, God can bring good out of every tragedy; faith tells us that this is the case (see Rom 8:28; CCC 324). However, there is more that can be said.

For a person with an atheistic perspective, death is the ultimate end. If someone has suffered unjustly in this life, that is it. The person is just out of luck. Nothing can ever make up for the suffering that he or she experienced.

But from a Christian perspective, death is not the end. It is a transition, and we will exist forever. That means that no matter what we have suffered in this life or how short our life was, God can make it up to us. Indeed, God does far more. Saint Paul says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Rom 8:18)

Elsewhere, he says, "So we do not lose heart.... For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

This is part of what makes it possible to live with the mystery of evil and suffering. I might experience evil and suffering in this life. From an earthly perspective, I may suffer, but I can endure that if I know that death is not the end and God will more than compensate for what I have suffered innocently. I do not have to know all the reason why this or that evil or suffering occurs, as long as I know that God will make everything right in the end.

~ Fr. Lewis