

## **Misery Needs Company**

As the Dr. Jerome Lejeune Catholic Medical Guild of Northeast Indiana grows, we have decided to begin monthly meetings that will provide fellowship, support, and guided discussion for area Catholic medical professionals. Not only doctors (of all stripes), but nurses and nurse practitioners, physician assistants and medical assistants, pharmacists and physical therapists, and anyone who cares for patients, are welcome to attend.

### **Mass Appeal**

Every third Saturday morning, we will meet for 8 a.m. mass at the Cathedral's MacDougal Chapel. Following mass, we will adjourn to a meeting area for refreshments and a guided discussion of Blessed Pope John Paul II's 1984 Apostolic Letter *On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*.

From the inception of our guild, Bishop Rhoades has desired that we better understand how our Catholic faith can improve our abilities to serve our patients. He initially asked us to review the 1995 *Charter for Health Care Workers*, but then we learned that it has been updated by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers and is waiting for approval before being released. Therefore, until the updated charter is available, Bishop Rhoades has approved the letter on suffering as an excellent and appropriate first topic for discussion that will take us through the end of 2014.

### **Why Study Suffering?**

Why did Pope John Paul write a letter on the meaning of human suffering?

First, because suffering is "almost inseparable from man's earthly existence" and because "throughout his earthly life man walks in one manner or another on the long path of suffering, it is precisely on this path that the Church at all times... should meet man." Second, suffering is a mystery that lacks meaning to many people. And third, because the existence of human suffering is the

greatest argument against God's existence, or at least against his love for us. For these reasons, Blessed John Paul II wanted us to understand the origin, purpose, and meaning of human suffering.

As health care professionals, we have a double-reason for wanting to understand the meaning and purpose of human suffering. First, as human beings, we suffer and need to know how to incorporate our sufferings into the meaning of our lives. Second, we care for suffering people every day, and if we can meet our patients in their suffering and help to alleviate it physically *and* spiritually, then we have performed a great service.

### **St. Paul's Secret to Happiness**

In this letter, Blessed John Paul II unpacks a mysterious verse of Saint Paul's:

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (Colossians 1:24)

It seems to me that Paul is on to something greater than room-temperature fusion, a perpetual motion machine, or a car that runs on air. He is claiming that he can take the worst aspect of human life – suffering - and turn it into the greatest thing in human life – happiness. Suffering is something we all want to avoid for its own sake; happiness is something we all seek for its own sake. If suffering can lead to my happiness, then I have found the secret of life.

### **Christ's Secret to Happiness**

Is this impossible? What did Christ himself say,

"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.. ." (Matthew 5:11-12)

In the economy of God, there is an essential linkage between suffering and blessedness, or true happiness.

### **Good for You; Good for Your Patients**

If you want to learn how to be joyful and happy in suffering, and if you want to be able to pass that on to your patients, come learn from the wisdom of the Church passed on by Blessed Pope John Paul II.

We want *your* company as we study human misery – and find happiness within it.

### **Please Join Us**

(Monthly third Saturday meetings begin November 16, 2013 at MacDougal Chapel following 8 a.m. mass. Go to [fortwaynecma.com](http://fortwaynecma.com) or call [260-437-8377](tel:260-437-8377) for more information. Dr. McGovern is the President of the Dr Jerome Lejeune Guild of Northeast Indiana.)

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