

But I Have A.D.D.

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“So to keep me from being too elated by the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being to elated” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Walking through the woods, whether hiking for enjoyment or searching for a bounty of blackberries, often entails buck brush and berry bushes scratching and burning the skin and drawing from the vein the bright red blood of pain and suffering. The thorns of these plants are painful when you step on them, when they get just under the hard callous of your heel. Each step you take is more painful than the last as the briar works deeper into the flesh.

Suffering, except for the occasional masochist, isn't something a person looks forward to in this life. The life of ease is preferred, one of peace and happiness. We don't even like to think about the possibility of suffering. We run away from it in fear. But when suffering does fall upon a person, the pity parties usually begin. “Woe is me,” we cry. We want people to feel sorry for us because of everything we endure in this so-called God-forsaken world.

This is the cry of the pagan, the unbeliever, the non-Christian, but it is the lament of the Christian who is weak in faith too. It is the Christian's cry because in this world we are not alone. The old evil foe is darting through the arid wilderness of our lives, seeking to torment and devour us. He takes aim with his venomous arrows and buries them into our lives, trying to destroy us by causing us to doubt God, and His presence, care, and love for us, His children.

“Woe is me” is a declaration that expresses a great deal of anguish. Its source can be seen as coming from two unequal places, yet both sources of suffering are real for the Christian and heathen alike. It is the source of suffering in our lives and its purpose is to show what man believes. The devil certainly has his sights on you, but he is not in ultimate control. To think that he is is to be in grave error. To think that he is in control is to destroy what Christ has done for you in His suffering, death, and

resurrection. No, the devil is not in control. He is not the final word, for he was made to eat the dust of the earth. He was cast down from heaven. It was his head that was crushed in final defeat at Calvary. All that remains is the dark angel in his final death throes as the dark gives way to Light.

There is another source of suffering, which in Christian circles is hard to swallow, but true nevertheless. God Himself subjects His beloved to pain and suffering. This is not without purpose. He is not a God who dangles us like spiders over an open flame to watch us squirm. He is a God of love. But as this sinful flesh remains in this sinful world, it needs to be disciplined and put in submission. This is the place where we are condemned: in the flesh. The flesh, the old man in us all, must die, because the old man wants the forbidden fruit. It craves its sweet nectar. It craves to be God. "Look at what I did!" But then, for our good, a thorn is given to us.

The thorn slices deep; it cuts and drives you to despair. Good. That is why it's there: to destroy you, to bring you to your knees, and to cause you to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" Yet, the thorn remains, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" Again, it says, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" And He does, but the thorn remains.

To be a seminarian is no small endeavor. To seek the Office of the Holy Ministry is certainly a noble desire, a desire given to you by God. It is a fruit of the Word and Sacraments given to you and for you. But also given to you is a thorn in your flesh. It is a mind that is never quiet, that thinks of every little thing. It is a mind that observes everything around you, the fly buzzing against the window, the hum of the lights above, the chirping of the birds outside. Silence, too, roars loudly in your head, preventing you from completing the simplest of tasks. Even reading a paragraph, following a simple argument, or listening to a sermon can be, to say the least, thorny. Adult Attention Deficit Disorder is certainly a thorn in the flesh but is nothing to keep you from a faithful and useful life as the mouth of God to His people.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." These words of Jesus to St. Paul are for you too. The thorn of A.D.D. is a constant reminder that you are a sinner, but as a baptized child of God, you are also a saint. The Word of Christ's Holy Absolution makes you who you are. You are perfect and holy in His sight. To have A.D.D. does not exclude any man from this high and holy Office.

You are not left to fend for yourself. God provides for you through His bountiful means. He gives those who have gone into battle before you, who know what it is to struggle with your particular thorn. There are means available to help in coping with symptoms: medications, structured schedules, and personal study methods.

A.D.D. is real. It is crippling. It is a thorn in the flesh, but that thorn does not make you who you are. You are God's. You were created out of His great love, and because you are His, He provides all that you need to support this body and life. For you, the greatest and most invaluable of God's means are His Word and Sacraments.

He is there for you where He has promised to be. He is there for you through thick and thin, giving you the forgiveness of sins. He is there to hear your confession and to preach Absolution to you through His pastors. And as your dear heavenly Father, He is certainly quick to hear your prayers, just as He was there for His own Son in the garden with blood pouring from His brow.

It is that blood of Jesus that makes all the difference. It is the burden of your sins, the thorn of your side, that Christ bore for you in His weakness. In your stead, He received the just punishment your thorn deserved. Now, you can stand in His stead before His people and preach the Good News.

God's grace is sufficient for you; nothing more is needed. The harvest is plentiful. The workers are few. Pray the Lord of the harvest would send you out to be among His workers.

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