

undergo many little deaths everyday in our fallen world. God's grace is available so we can face them patiently and praise God for using them to draw us closer to Him.

Pope John Paul II got his hand slammed in a car door earlier in his Pontificate. His immediate response to this was to say – "Thank you God for loving me in this way." St. Padre Pio kept up his good cheer despite being forbidden to hear Confessions and to offer Mass publicly for a time. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton moved on courageously with her life after the death of her husband and some children and became known as the good spirited "Mother Seton." By humbly resigning themselves to God's will the Saints, and future Saints, experience a certain joy amidst the difficult turns and sufferings of their lives. We are called by God to do the same, and with the help of His grace we can.

This past June I was given an invitation to share more deeply in God's generous love. Diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a type of cancer that begins in the lymphatic system, my summer plans quickly changed from spending eight weeks learning Spanish in Mexico to undergoing six cycles of chemotherapy from June through October. When I was given the diagnosis I was very much aware of God's presence because I immediately thought, "Well, I guess God does not want me to be in Mexico this summer," and I anticipated the blessings to come forth from this change of plans (that was certainly not my doing). I also felt an interior joy, recalling St. Therese of Lisieux's sentiments when she coughed up blood on her pillow, indicating the beginnings of her illness of tuberculosis. Like her, I felt chosen to suffer in a particular way, knowing that in doing so I would be drawn close to God and help in his plan of salvation by uniting my sufferings to His. I felt blessed to realize that God must have enough faith in me to know that He could give me this cross and that I would not lose my faith in Him.

I experienced other blessings too, including having quality time with family and friends in Minnesota whom I do not see much on account of studying nine months out of the year at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. The prayers and encouragement of so many others was also most wonderful and appreciated. The increased time I was able to spend in prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament during the summer was another great blessing. This time with the Eucharistic Lord helped me, along with my illness, to grow much closer to Him than I had been before. The fruits of this were evident to me by the wonderful fall semester that I had upon my return to seminary, even though I needed to finish three chemotherapy treatments during that time. Unfortunately, near the end of the semester, I noticed some swollen lymph nodes and was concerned that the cancer had returned. My concerns were found warranted as per the results of a biopsy taken during a doctor's visit before Christmas. So my plans of continuing with the last semester of study before diaconate ordination were changed. So what did I do then? Well, I took the advice I am offering in this article (although it was admittedly a bit harder to do this time) and, again, resigned myself to the will of God. After all, God's Divine providence is inscrutable and ordered to our well-being and salvation. Furthermore, God never gives us more than we can handle – with Him. So I can be assured that no matter what happens in the future, if I am faithful to God and humbly accept His plan for my life, it will be the most positive thing that I could ever hope for. We can all be assured of this despite the difficult turns and sufferings in life along the way.