

## Pursuing Spiritual Breakthrough

### Crises are Creative Opportunities

This seems like a highly relevant precept in our parish right now. There are a quite a few people who are in the midst of crises—medical, emotional, financial, etc. It is time for us to be decisive, to make a critical decision. Whom do I intend to follow? Whose report am I going to believe? The Christian author Henri Nouwen said, “I have an increasing sense that the most important crisis of our time is spiritual and that we need places where people can grow stronger in the spirit and be able to integrate the emotional struggles in their spiritual journeys.” This is a challenge for all of us. Our crises may appear to be physical, emotional, or in any other temporal arena, but the most important crisis we face is spiritual. And we “need a place where people can grow strong in the spirit.” It is time for Church of the Resurrection to be that place—a place where we, and anyone in this wider community will “be able to integrate the emotional struggles in their spiritual journeys.” It is time for this parish to realize the fulness of what God has called us to be. It is time for us to experience a profound spiritual breakthrough.

Crisis comes from the Greek verb, *krino*, which means to separate, and the noun, *krisis*, which means judgment. A crisis is a decisive point in time, or a given situation which requires us to make a judgment about what path we will follow. It is a time when things will become separated either as a change forced upon us, or because we make a decision to follow an alternate course. It is a turning point. A crisis initiates this demand for change. How that change is handled determines whether it will be a positive or negative change.

John F. Kennedy was president of the United States in one of the most fraught-filled times in American history. Our country literally faced the prospect of nuclear annihilation during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Kennedy said, after the crisis was resolved, “In a crisis, be aware of the danger--but recognize the opportunity.” Whatever crisis you may be facing, take it seriously, but also recognize that in Christ Jesus you have an opportunity for growth and change. God allows us to have these times of crisis to build our faith and dependence upon Him. The Psalmist said, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.” (Psalm 119:71) These times of affliction are opportunities for learning and growth. Psalm 107 gives us a series of crises facing God’s people, and resolves each with the words, “Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress...” To whom will you turn in your time of crisis? Will you try to resolve it yourself? Will you look to the politicians, doctors, insurance providers, your family? Or will you turn to God and put your trust in Him? Will you reach out to the faithful in the Body of Christ that we may “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ”? (Gal. 6:2) Psalm 34:19 promises us that, “many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”

A crisis is not necessarily a bad thing, rather a creative opportunity. It is a stripping away of our over-dependence on reason, emotion, and sensory experiences. God may have led us into this time of crisis, or like the prophet Jonah we may have created it for ourselves. Then again, simply living in a temporal world which is fallen and corrupt (e.g. pollution, crime, carcinogens, etc.) can be the cause of such a crisis. But we must remember that whatever the root of the crisis, it is not punishment or an affliction visited on us by God. He allows it, but it’s purpose is not punitive. It’s purpose is to set us free—a divine appointment with God designed to draw us closer to Him.

What crises are you facing? Turn to God and share your burden with His people. Trust in Him.