

Reflections

Fr. Peter Chiang

On Sept. 20, 2015, my family doctor told me that the biopsy report confirmed that I have cancer on my right lung.

On this news, my personal reaction was quite calm; it did not come as a surprise! In fact I even told myself “why not me”? For I have absolutely no reason for wishing bad things such as this to happen to other people. Therefore I accepted it very easily and willingly. I did not complain nor was I afraid because I know Jesus really loves me!

I am now 86 years old. Last year, I celebrated the 60th anniversary of my priesthood. What more can I ask for? These are real proof of God’s great love for me. Now He gave me lung cancer and surely I know He has His purposes for me.

First of all, He asks me to put my whole trust in Him for I am powerless in the face of lung cancer; furthermore, He asks me to be an example for all those who are suffering one kind of sickness or another. As a priest, I preach and encourage God’s people to build

a good relationship with Him and He will console them. And He will give them His abundant graces. Now I must do what I preach.



Whenever people ask me how I feel after learning of my lung cancer, my reply is I must live in the Lord always, therefore I am optimistic, I continue to be active and have good appetite. I can walk, I can drive my car and I am able to replace any priest nearby who asks for my help. Why should I be disturbed by my lung cancer?

I am a priest already for 61 years. I have heard and I have seen many Catholic people who could not accept serious sicknesses when they come, especially heart attack and various kinds of cancer. They complain to God, they stop praying, and some refuse to attend Sunday Masses. Worse of all, some completely abandon their Faith. And what is the result? They lose hope and live a miserable life.

As we are all human beings, we need the

good example and encouragement of others. As examples for us to imitate, let me use here two men of God from the Holy Bible as our inspiration for their determined mind to do God's will in the most touching way even in the midst of great suffering.

First, the strong faith of Job.

God tested him in the most severe way; within a short period of time, he lost all his properties, his good health and most of all his beloved children and family. From the crown of his head to his feet, God inflicted him with severe boils, so bad that even his wife mocked him saying, "Are you still holding to your innocence? Curse God and die." But Job said to his wife, "Are even you going to speak as senseless women do? We accept good things from God; and should we not accept evil?" (Job 2: 9-10).



Second, the great faith of Abraham.

God promised him that, though he was childless, his descendants will be countless as the stars of sky and the sand on the seashore. When he was a hundred years old, God gave him a son, Isaac. Then, God tested him again and asked him to sacrifice his one and only son to Him. On the way, his son asked him, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?" Abraham

answered, "God Himself will provide." Abraham obeyed God and was about to sacrifice Isaac, but God stopped him. We know that God would never ask him to kill his only son, but God just tested his faith (Gen 22: 1-14).

How many times does God also test our faith? In such moments, Job and Abraham are our best examples.

As I often preach the good news of Jesus and encourage God's people to build a good personal relationship with Him, this is how I must practice what I preach.

God's people must understand the teaching of Jesus, "I am the vine and you are the branches...." (Jn 15: 5a), so that we may grow in the Lord and bear plentiful fruits. When a serious illness comes to us, it should not be an obstacle, rather it must become the best way for us to grow faster in the Lord and strengthen our Christian life.

This is my ardent desire and wish -- that whoever reads this short reflection may share with others especially those who are suffering from a serious illness, and be inspired by my message. If they can truly trust in the Lord who is the source of life and joy, they will receive God's infinite love and gain strength to do His holy will.

