



Church of Santa Maria

40 Santa Maria Way | Orinda CA 94563 | 925-254-2426 | www.SantaMariaOrinda.com

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Why does a good God let bad things happen?

Responding to suffering in Afghanistan by taking Jesus' lead

Pictured: An evacuation flight out of the Kabul airport is being loaded



23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 5, 2021

The other day, one of my friends asked me what I thought about the situation in Afghanistan. My response was complex: it hinged on experiences watching newsreels of evacuations from both Afghanistan and Vietnam from 50 years ago; on my connection with the Maqsoodi family (one of the refugee families our parish "adopted" a few years ago); and on the experiences of a childhood friend who has split her time between the United States and Afghanistan her whole life, and who has shed many tears in the last couple weeks.

When our country announced our military withdrawal from Afghanistan after almost 20 years and the Taliban quickly took over, I was heartsick at the chaos and violence. The endless news of raids, bombings, restrictions, executions, and civilian deaths has been horrendous, to say the least.

It has understandably led many to once again ask that age-old question: **"Why does a good God let bad things happen?"**

I could give you an academic response to that question (and maybe I will in a future bulletin article or Coffee Talk), but if you are like me, that's not really what you need right now.

What we need right now is to know how to respond, to know that God weeps with us, and to realize that we have been taught how to gracefully face suffering - by Christ on the Cross.

These are a few lessons about suffering that I have taken from Jesus' own approach to it:

1. **When you don't have the words to deal with what you're facing, pray the Psalms.** The Psalms cover almost every human emotion and need, and we can use them to speak to the Lord. For example, Jesus prayed the beginning of Psalm 22 during his crucifixion. Regarding our bulletin topic, I find Psalms 33, 44, and 140 to speak for some of my feelings.
2. **Speak to the Father.** Multiple times during his suffering, the Son prays directly to the Father. "Father, forgive them," and "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" come to mind. We have a loving Father who holds the universe in the palm of His mighty hand, and like an earthly father, He can give us advice, lend us strength, and lead by example how to move forward.
3. **Leave room for God.** Jesus didn't want to be crucified! He asked that the Father "let this cup pass" from him (Mt 26:39). But in the same breath, he said, "But not what I will, but what you will." In Paul's letter to the Romans, he reminds the people, "do not look for revenge, but leave room for the wrath [of God]" (12:19). It's something we don't often talk about (being rather uncomfortable with wrath), but God's wrath isn't the intolerant, capricious, self-important wrath of human anger. Instead, it's perfect wrath against sin in accordance with God's justice - his love in action against objective moral evil, if you will. We talk a lot about God's mercy, and forget the flip side - there's no mercy if there's no offense for Him to show mercy to. Pray for the evildoers' repentance, and leave room for God's justice and mercy.

And in the midst of our prayerful and philosophical reflection on evil in the world, it's often good for the soul to take action. The childhood friend I mentioned above has just launched an amazing resource for those who want to help or who need help - www.HelpAfghansNow.info. Check it out to see how you can volunteer, learn more, donate, or connect with those who are in need.

It's really hard to think about forgiving the people committing atrocities against humanity - and secular and political narratives will say we shouldn't - but that's what we're called to do as God's people. We're also called to trust in both God's justice and His mercy. And on top of that, to be the hands and feet of Jesus on earth. It's a tall order, but [nothing is impossible with God](#).

*Megan Arteaga
Youth Ministry Coordinator*

Weekend Worship Opportunities

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday, 4:00-4:30pm

Church Plaza

Reconciliation also available by appointment

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday, September 5, 2021

8:30am | Mass in the Church; also [Livestreamed](#) (available all day)

10:30am | Mass in the Church

Join us this Sunday in the Church at 8:30am or 10:30am for Mass! We are blessed to be able to celebrate with you.

No more social distancing is required, so all pews will be available to the congregation. **Masks covering the nose and mouth are required for all while indoors, regardless of vaccination status.**

If you are unable to physically join us, we will continue to livestream the 8:30am Mass for you to participate from home.

COVID-19 Worship Updates

Livestream Masses will continue to serve our parishioners

Thank you to those of you who responded to our survey about the Livestreamed Masses.

We began streaming our Masses at the beginning of the pandemic when that was the only opportunity for Sunday worship for our parishioners, and continued as more options became available, like Parking Lot Masses and even our transition back inside.

Now that the dispensation from attending Sunday Mass has ended and we are grateful to be able to worship again in our beautiful church, we wondered if there was still a need for the Sunday livestream. According to your very thoughtful responses, we have decided that, at least for the time being, there is.

Many have expressed the appreciation of homebound friends and family members who still feel connected to their parish community with the livestreamed Masses. Others noted their gratitude for participating in their usual Mass while sick or unable to attend Mass for other legitimate reasons. Still others noted continuing concerns related to the pandemic.

Although the ideal situation would be to have our entire community gathered in person for our Sunday worship, we are glad that this ministry can currently serve, in some small way, those unable to do so.



Service and Outreach

Pray for the Maqsoodi Family

An update from Social Justice

The Social Justice team is asking for your prayers for the Maqsoodi family. Our parish co-sponsored this ten-person family from Afghanistan in 2017. The family received green cards upon arrival, given their work for the U.S. government. They have been living in Fremont for the past several years and have been doing very well at work and school.

Earlier this summer Khalid, the oldest son, got married in Kabul, and the entire family attended the wedding. While Mohammad, the father, and Asma and Tuba (two of the daughters) came back to their Fremont home, the rest of the family stayed to spend more time with their family members who still live in Afghanistan.

The other six Maqsoodi children and Zarmena, their mother, are still there and will be returning home on a commercial airline, according to Mohammad. However, he doesn't know when. Please join us in praying for their safety and the safety of those still there following the recent August 31st deadline.



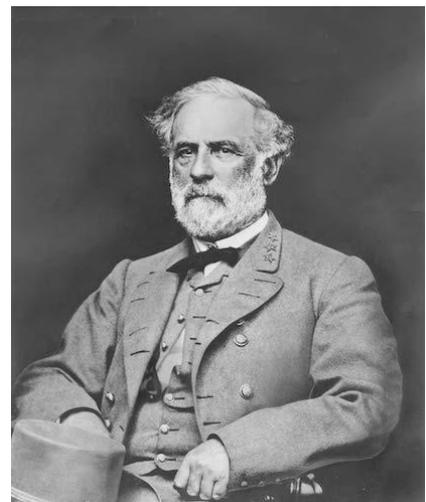
Food for Thought

Robert E. Lee and Me

A First Things article

On my desk is a picture of Robert E. Lee. It sits right beside a picture of my great-grandfather. One was a Confederate general—a leader of men, an owner of slaves. The other was a shop steward—a sometime drunken whoremonger, the man I loved most in this world.

As I sit writing, I am but a few miles from the site of the only Civil War battle fought in my home county of Arkansas: the Battle of Longview. It was a short-lived



gambit. My forebears lost that battle, and in time they lost the war. But in losing a cause they gained a... [read more](#)

Faith Formation for All Ages

Tell a friend - registration is open!

Do you know anyone in 1st grade who should be starting prep for First Eucharist?

How about a brand new 6th grader looking for a fun place to hang out, like MSYG?

Or maybe you know a freshman you want to have a closer connection with the Lord who could start Confirmation!

Tell them to visit our website -www.santamariaorinda.com - and sign up for our formation programs using the link in the Announcements section!

OR: [Click here to register!](#)

If you have questions on these programs before registration opens, please visit [the Faith Formation page of our website](#) for K-5th grade, or the [MSYG](#) or [Teen Confirmation](#) pages for 6th-12th grade.

Are you ready for the next step in your Catholic journey?

Have you been worshipping with us, but never officially took the steps to become Catholic? Or have you been a Catholic all your life, but never celebrated all the Sacraments of Initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist?

Have you joined us from a different faith background and would now like to find out more about the Catholic Church?

If any of these questions apply to you - or if you know of anyone who could answer YES - please ask them to email [Father George](#) or [Tony](#) or contact either of them by phone at 925-254-2426.

We are planning to start inquiry classes in the fall. Depending on COVID



protocols, classes may be in person, on Zoom, or a combination of both.

Parish Life

Pray for our young people receiving their First Eucharist next Sunday!

On Sunday, September 12, a few of our Faith Formation students will finally receive their First Eucharist!



After almost two years of preparation, family retreat days, and some refresher classes, they are finally ready to celebrate this beautiful Sacrament.

Keep them in your prayers as they continue in their journey to grow closer to the Lord!

Did you know we pray the Rosary before Daily Mass?

You may already know that in addition to Sundays, Masses are also celebrated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the Church.



But did you know that before Mass, you're invited to pray the Rosary?

The parishioners who attend Daily Mass would like to invite you to this peaceful prayer before weekday Masses, as they have found it to be fruitful in their own spiritual lives. Why not try it out?

How can I keep supporting Santa Maria?

Thank you so much for thinking about us and continuing to support our parish during these trying times! We are greatly appreciative of any help you can provide.



You may drop your collection in the offertory baskets at Masses, mail a check to the Parish Office (40 Santa Maria Way, Orinda CA 94563), or [make a one-time donation using Faith Direct](#), our eGiving service, to make your offering.

If you would like, you can also [sign up for recurring giving through Faith Direct](#) to continue to give to the Sunday plate even though you can't come to the church to drop it in the basket as usual. Again, we thank you for your planning and your generosity!

Mass Intentions

Sunday, September 5

8:30am: Intention of the Presider
10:30am: Parishioners of Santa Maria, Living and Deceased

Monday, September 6

8:30am: Intention of the Presider

Wednesday, September 8

8:30am: Intention of the Presider

Friday, September 10

8:30am: Intention of the Presider

Mass Intentions are a beautiful way of praying for your intentions or for the souls of our deceased loved ones. To request a Mass Intention, please contact Mirna in the Parish Office [by email](#) or at 925-254-2426

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Pastoral Team

Reverend George Mockel

Pastor
gmockel@santamariaorinda.com

Deacon Rey Encarnacion

rencarnacion@santamariaorinda.com
x310

Deacon James Pearce

jpearce@santamariaorinda.com x301

Mirna Wong

Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper
mwong@santamariaorinda.com x301

Tony Millette

Liturgy and Music
tmillette@santamariaorinda.com

Sister Mary Margaret Phan, LHC

Faith Formation (Grades K-5)

Prayer Intentions

For the Sick:

Sonny Acosta, Mary Beth Alban, Joan Artmann, Shoab Aryan, Kristy Blackey-Taylor, Kathie Brady, Miguel Briseno, Maria Carmen, Fred Chavaria, Grace Parent DeBoot, Lorna Elliott, Anne Emery, Nora Enriquez, Alfred Ferreira, Anthony Fisher, Emidio Fonseca, Liam Foley, Patricia Fox, Bridget Gallagher, Noreen Gillham, Jennifer Gray, Judy Gust, Florentino Ibabao, Brian Kelly, Mason Kelly, Aileen Kelly, Jim Kennedy, Jerry Kirk, Lawrence Knapp, Carol Koupus, Patricia McGuire, Rose Mary McPhee, Jim M., Maria Elsa Moya, Robert Nick, Arsi Orihuella, Deacon Jim Pearce, Melissa Pearce, Kathleen Pelz, Ann Powell, Mark Ricci, Ben Richey, Brian Riley, Patrick Sheehy, Ustrula Simmons, Scott Treter, Steve Turner, Jean Wells, Faye Young

mmphan@santamariaorinda.com x306

Megan Arteaga

Youth Ministry (Grades 6-12),
Communications, and CYO
martega@santamariaorinda.com x308

Sister Mary Magdalene Nguyen, LHC

Pastoral Care of the Sick
mmnguyen@santamariaorinda.com x309

Would you like to add yourself or someone else to the prayer list? Please ensure you have their permission, then [contact Megan in the Parish Office.](#)

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