

Does God Have Favorites? WEEK THREE November 2 2025

We're still learning the full extent of the death and destruction caused by Hurricane Melissa. After devastating Jamaica, the storm moved on to Cuba, Haiti and the Bahamas before weakening, bringing rain and wind to our area.

This was the most powerful storm on earth this year.

The most powerful, but not the only storm.

Remember that the year began with wildfires in California which destroyed 16,000 homes and caused dozens of deaths.

Then in July there were the flash floods in Texas that claimed 132 lives including 27 girls and counselors at a summer camp.

One thing which this year's disasters teach us is that Mother Nature is indifferent to age, gender, or income - doesn't care if you live in a small village in the Caribbean or a huge mansion in California.

One word you often hear from victims of disasters is why?

Why did this happen?

Why weren't we better prepared?

And even, *why didn't God protect us?*

SCREEN: Does God Have Favorites main screen

This is Week Three of our message series that asks the question,
Does God have favorites?

It's a timely question that coincides with this past week's hurricane and today's commemoration of All Souls as we remember and pray for our loved ones who have died and all those who've lost their lives.

I think we all know people who seem to sail through life, untouched by storms, tragedies or crises.

We also know people who suffer immensely.

So today we're tackling the question,

Does God favor those who have an easy life more than those who suffer?

Does God favor those who have an easy life more than those who suffer?

The readings we heard give us some answers.

Let's start with the gospel.

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Jesus was traveling from town to town, preaching and teaching and healing.

As he approached the gates of a city called Nain a funeral procession was passing by.

We were told that the deceased was a young man - the only son of a widow.

In Jewish culture, grown children are responsible for providing for their mother after their father dies - giving material and emotional support.

With this widow's only son gone, who would care for her?

Who would hug her when she was sad, comfort her when she was afraid, who would help dry her tears?

Jesus was so moved with pity that he touched the coffin and called for the man to rise.

And he did - Jesus raised him from the dead.

Which led the people who witnessed this miracle to proclaim:

SCREEN: God has visited his people.

God has visited his people.

This is why Jesus came.

His mission on earth was to be Emmanuel -

a name that is translated as: God with us.

The story of the raising of the widow's son is just one example of what we see throughout the gospels.

Jesus always made time for those who were suffering - the hungry, the hurting, the grieving, and the outcast.

He was often with people at their lowest and darkest moments.

We don't find many stories of Jesus engaging with those who had it easy in life because they didn't see the need for a savior.

Last week I quoted Pope Leo who writes that God has a preferential love for the poor - which we see so powerfully in Jesus.

And the poor includes those who struggle emotionally or spiritually and those who are persecuted.

Jesus found that they were more open to his teachings because they knew they couldn't make it through life alone.

And one reason Jesus loves those who are struggling is because he too experienced pain and suffering - he can relate to what they're going through.

Think about it: every Mass recalls Jesus' passion and death.

The rejection and ridicule he endured.

The humiliation of his arrest and trial.

The torment of his crucifixion.

And the horror of his death.

Jesus went through all of this.

And because he did, he knows your pain.

He can relate to anything you're going through. And he wants to be with you whenever you struggle.

Our first reading today from the Book of Wisdom teaches this same truth.

What did we hear?

SCREEN: The souls of the just are in the hands of God and no torment shall touch them.

**They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead;
and their passing away was thought an affliction
and their going forth from us, utter destruction.**

But they are in peace.

If you've ever attended a Catholic funeral you might have heard this reading.

It was read at my mom's funeral.

My family chose it because it's comforting to hear that our mom is at peace.

It's hopeful to know that death is not the end.

The author of Wisdom had another purpose.

He was encouraging the faithful to not be distracted or tempted by worldly concerns and instead embrace the ways of God.

And according to Wisdom,

believers who live this way are rewarded with the prize of eternal life.

This is God's desire for all of us - that we

experience His peace which will help us through painful and challenging times.

So don't ever think that your suffering, or the suffering of others (like those in natural disasters) is a sign that God doesn't love or care for you or them because it's not. If God did not abandon his own Son in his hour of need, God will never abandon you. He's always on your side, always loves you, and always hears your prayers. And as a Church, it's our mission to make sure everyone knows this.

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We want everyone who walks through our doors to know that no matter who they are or where they're from and no matter what's going on in their lives, they will be welcomed, accepted and loved at St. Pius.

And we want this for you.

So any time you are struggling, any time you're in pain, any time you feel overwhelmed by life - for whatever reason - know that this is a safe space where you are supported and prayed for.

Two weeks ago a parishioner asked me what my favorite thing is about being a priest?

And I said that I get the privilege to be with people in some of the most intimate moments of life.

And whether it's a happy occasion like the baptism of a new born baby, or a sad moment like a funeral, my message is essentially the same.

My mission as a priest is to assure people of this truth:

SCREEN: God is with you and always will be

God is with you and always will be.

That's the same message we heard in today's readings and it's something we want everyone to know.

God is with them and always will be.

But that's not just my mission, it's all of ours.

Now to get really practical, let me mention a few ways that you can put today's message into practice.

This week's bulletin has a link if you'd like to assist those who are struggling to rebuild after Hurricane Melissa.

Donations will go to Catholic Relief Services.

SCREEN: Families Helping Families screen

This weekend we're beginning our Thanksgiving food drive called Families Helping Families.

This annual event assists those who are physically hungry, helping them to celebrate Thanksgiving.

With the government shutdown having passed the one month mark, more and more people in our area are struggling, so please be as generous as you can.

You'll hear more details about how you can participate at the end of Mass.

Here's the final opportunity I'll mention to put today's message into practice.

SCREEN: Evening of Remembrance announcement

On Wednesday November 12 we will have our annual Evening of Remembrance.

In person and online, hundreds of people will come together for prayer, music, scripture and reflections.

And we will speak out loud the names of those we grieve and we light candles in their memory.

This year for the first time I will be lighting a candle for my mom.

For me, the most powerful thing about the evening is simply coming together with others who've lost a loved one.

We're united in our grief but we don't stay stuck in our grief.

Through our worship we experience encouragement, hope, and peace.

We profess the belief that we heard in today's readings.

That God does not abandon us when we hurt - no, God consoles and comforts us through other people.

SCREEN: Does God Have Favorites main screen

We know beyond any doubt that God doesn't favor those who have life easy.

We also know with absolute certainty that God is always on the side of those who suffer in life.

Today, may we hear the Lord calling us to embrace these truths that we may help those who are hurting. Amen. +