

## .....In Sickness and in Health

In twenty-eight years of priesthood I have witnessed well over 1,000 weddings and they remain one of my favorite things to do. I especially enjoy anniversaries and celebrations of couples that have made it to some important date. The wedding vows are about courage, commitment, compassion, and love, and when lived well they are the true secrets to a happy life. They are the virtues we live in sickness and in health.

I have been in great health my entire life and very grateful for that but under no illusion that it was permanent. Now I can add sickness, which was somewhat anticipated because of my significant and long family history of cancer.

I just learned last week that I have now joined over 250,000 people with a certain type of cancer, and one of 60,000 people who get it each year. It is becoming quite common and has no known cause. If I have accepted the good in gratitude all these years I must accept the difficult too, and in peace, while still doing everything I can to treat and heal it.

Fortunately, because of my overall good health, and my particular version of this cancer (Follicular Lymphoma), I will be very responsive to normal treatment with an excellent prognosis for the future. I should be able to continue most of my normal duties during this time, with the possibility of some hair loss, which grows back quickly afterwards.

As you might know, I will be leading a long scheduled archaeological tour of the Holy Land in May with over forty parishioners to visit the places where Jesus and the prophets lived. I am really looking forward to this spiritual pilgrimage. It is fortunate timing because I also believe that seeing where our faith began is good medicine! I continue to be amazed at the helpful and positive insights we can receive from the example of Moses in the Scriptures, Jesus in the Gospels, in our Adoration Chapel, at Mass, and even in archaeology! I can honestly say that His way works, in sickness and in health.

I know that everything we are and have in our life is to be used in a courageous, committed, compassionate, and loving way for others. You hear each priest say that at every wedding and every Mass at the consecration when he repeats the words of Jesus, "This is my body and my blood (my entire self) for you." Mass is also good medicine.

I have only one very sincere request. I would ask that you please view this event as I do, and I am fine, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. My physical needs are in the hands of the excellent staff at UCLA, (I have not told them yet that I went to USC!)

I hear from many parishioners each week about their own health or other sick relatives or friends who are not doing well and are scared, frightened, or anxious. While I certainly appreciate your prayers, these others need our prayers and support first. I am sure that God knows how to assign our prayers to where they are most needed! I remain happy in my life of faith, in sickness and in health.

God bless!

Fr. Dave