

## PAIN

### What Does Pain Teach Us?

#### The Spiritual Lessons of Pain

Recently, I've had the opportunity to learn more about something relatively new to me (well, not new of course, but certainly, in its intense form): pain, or rather, the possible effects of it on the spirit.

A thoroughly-incapacitating foot operation in April taught me the following. Firstly, that pain and distress can possibly make one inward-looking, self-regarding, and, yes, selfish: *poor me* – worse off, clearly, than others around me – can become the centre of my thoughts, if I let it.

Also, it can lure me into being too soft on myself, and what I do. It can let me excuse myself in order to have more indulgences than I would normally allow, from taking it easy too much (“you *must* rest!) to enjoying lots of extra goodies – food, drink – “with all you're going through, you've *earned* it!”.

Worse, I fancy, is that it can destroy – or let you destroy, if you allow it – the **balance** that I consider so important to the whole of life, and particularly the spiritual life, or one's understanding of, and practice of, Christianity. One temptation is to over-indulge in one's poor condition (as I've suggested), to nurse, to indulge and even – the worst of all, perhaps – to *wallow* in one's sickness.

Avoiding that temptation can easily throw one into the opposite, which seems so noble and good – “I'm the sort who rises above this petty sort of thing! I'm too brave and bold for this! Pain is an illusion that weak people suffer from! It's not going to change me, or affect what I do one little bit! I'm strong! I'm resourceful! I'll carry on just as normal, doing everything as before ... [quickly followed by] Errrrh!!”

Yes, one has to know one's limitations, take sensible care, resist pride, arrogance, and foolhardiness. As ever, getting the balance right is not easy.

But I'll certainly have a fresh attitude towards that list of names - read out each week in church prayers for the sick - that I've listened to for ... what, five or six decades.

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