

THE WISDOM OF MRS. TRAVERS... In my first parish Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Scarsdale, New York, I inherited a good number of communion calls from a priest there who was reassigned to a new parish. A "Communion Call" is a visit that a priest, deacon or special minister makes to the housebound to bring the Eucharist to them. For me, it's always a wonderful experience. Now, there was one communion call at Immaculate Heart Parish that I could never forget. The lady's name was Mrs. Mercedes Travers and she lived on Clarence Rd. Mrs. Travers was almost 90 years old and in failing health. She would regale me with stories about priests that she knew through the years. Mrs. Travers never complained about her health. She had an expression delivered in her Irish Brogue that went something like this: "From the time you're born to you lie in a hearse, there's nothing so bad that it couldn't be worse!" Through the years, I have often thought about those words of wisdom. When we honestly think about our own sufferings and trials in life, we could say, "It could always be worse!" But oftentimes instead of adopting that attitude, what happens? We complain! Or as an old Irish grandmother put it, "You're having a pity party aren't you?" When we are absorbed inwardly by our own problems and troubles, we do indeed tend to have pity parties, in which "Poor Me" is center stage. One way to get out of the complaining rut is to think a little about the sufferings of others and indeed to think more about the sufferings of Jesus Christ. The Scripture tell us, "Think Diligently Upon Him Who Endured So Many Contradictions That You May Not Faint Or Grow Weary." When we do reflect upon the sufferings of Christ we "Get of Ourselves" and are strengthened to bear our daily cross, whatever that might be. We are now in the Season of Lent and the church encourages us to consider more deeply the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Meditating on the Passion of Christ is not meant to be an exercise in morbidity or self-punishment. Rather, it is meant to spur us on to greater devotion, sacrifice and generosity in our own lives. St. Gregory wrote: "If we recall the Passion of Jesus Christ, nothing seems so hard that it cannot be borne with equanimity." The saints knew what they were talking about! An excellent way for all of us to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ is to pray the Stations of the Cross during Lent. Here at St. Charles, the Stations are conducted each Friday in the church after the 11:30 AM Mass and at 7:30 PM in the evening. At each Station, we "Stop," pray and consider what it cost our Blessed Lord to achieve our salvation. In the Stations, we see our Lord accused, then condemned to death but silent through it all. We witness his carrying the heavy cross, falling three times, but each time valiantly picking up that cross and beginning again. We view his Blessed Mother Mary consoling and comforting him on that sorrowful way. Finally, the crucifixion itself, Jesus bows his head and dies in fulfillment of his Father's will. When we prayerfully make the Stations the Lord will give us the interior strength to bear the crosses of our own lives. Yes, it could always be worse for us in this life, but it is always better when we unite our sufferings with those of the Lord. "We Adore You O Christ And We Praise You; For By Your Holy Cross, You Have Redeemed The World."

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Jerome