

## FEBRUARY 16, 2026 FATHER JOHN BERTAO

As usual, I always have a little question to ask and start with. And the question is today, have you been lucky enough to suffer pain that no medication could take away? And yes, I did say "lucky." I do mean lucky enough.

You see, several years ago, I was experiencing physical pain that no doctor could explain or give me any reason why, or something to take my pain away. They could not discover what it was. Until a friend introduced me to his doctor, who looking at the various x-rays, MRIs, and all of these things that they do, he rushed me to the local emergency department of a hospital, and stressed to the medical team what my problem was. And after questioning and counselling and so on, it was a collapsed vertebrae. Ouch. It really hurt.

I share this with you perhaps to give you some comfort that some of us tend to be alone in our suffering. As I was putting this homily together-- it came to mind that my mother, for the many, many years, especially my adult life, she suffered from something called migraine headaches. She never complained. I knew that she had a headache because of the expression on her face, and sometimes she'd put cold compresses on her head, to try and alleviate it. No medication would ever take it away. She suffered quietly.

And I said, "Mom, we gotta do something to give you some comfort." And she said, "My comfort will come." "When I go to heaven." She got her comfort. I'm sure she did.

You see, God is always there, he's present with you, with Mom, with me. All we need to do is to have faith in him, and practice it, knowing that

God never abandons us. No matter what kind of pain we may have, physical, emotional, or other.

Do you remember maybe today's first reading, from the first letter of James, and I quote, "Consider with all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance." In other words, don't give up! No matter how long it takes, he says.

Here James is encouraging us to be patient and not to lose faith or hope. He tells us to put faith into action, knowing that nothing, physical or otherwise, can open to us that God is aware-- he is aware of all that we have, and he will, at the proper time, give the healing that one-- from one source or another.

Trust me. I experienced all the above, and with the help of friends and the medical profession, I, thanks be to God, pulled through, with a great deal and total trust and faith in the healing touch of Jesus. Even to this day, I consider it a sign that I still had a mission to accomplish, and here I am to tell you about it.

So, are you looking for a sign? The question might be do you know the sign you're looking for? Will you recognize when you see it?

In the Gospel, the Pharisees were demanding an early shattering sign. An earthly shattering sign. And there are many signs all through the Gospel such as the making water flow backwards uphill, to being-- the blind restoring their-- the blind restoring their sight, the paralysed being able to walk and so on...

As one of my sources writes: "Perhaps Jesus was refusing to provide such a trick sign and regarded his healing and exorcisms as simply works of kindness and mercy. Perhaps-- perhaps, the mention of a sign

like that to the prophet Jonah," that was added later on in the Gospels, "was Jesus having proved such a sign in the form of the resurrection. Even then, many did not believe it."

Father Joseph writes on the passage as follows, "This reading describes the absence of spiritual insight. The Pharisees wanted a sign, but received none. The Apostles received a sign, the miracle of the loaves, but they also failed to see the meaning."

You see, spiritual insight is still necessary to see God at work. Jesus cautions against cynicism, or poisoned leaven of the-- especially that's poisoned leaven are the Pharisees, who tried to explain everything away, by reducing it to political or psychological factors. In other words, they are trying to discredit Jesus and his loving concern for all of humanity, no matter what age.

And that was 2,000 years ago, the time of my mom, and even to this day. Jesus knew the hearts of those who came to test him. They were more interested in seeking signs, to prove that they were right and Jesus was wrong. But they failed. Jesus revealed the true intention of their heart. They came to argue with him and to test him, because they did not believe that he spoke in the name of his Father in heaven. They wanted, as I said before, to discredit his claim to be the true Messiah and saviour. They unfortunately were blindsided to the truth of Jesus' message, that the Father had sent him, the only begotten Son, to set them free from sin, Satan, and death itself.

See, no miracle of Jesus would convince them. Their hearts were full of self-seeking pride and glory for themselves.

My dear friends in Christ, none of us is exempt from suffering, of one form or another. So, how we react is what we do with what is up to us for the suffering that we are going through.

My suggestion is seek medical advice, perhaps even proper medication, but never-- please, never ever lose focus of Jesus. Like my mother did. He knew what she was going through. She knew he knew that. And she kept total, total faith, and kept on going with life.

Trust him. Trust in Jesus. He will not fail you. Trust in him. He will do the rest. Again, seek medical advice. Get as much medical attention as you can, and medication and so on, but never, ever replace the medication with a love of Jesus. They can go together. Why not? Give it a try.

You see, he loves you so much. He wants the best for each one of us, if not here in this world, then definitely in the next.

So I close with a prayer.

Lord Jesus, may I always recognize your saving presence in my life, and never forget your promises when I encounter trials and difficulties. Give me a faith that never waivers, a hope that never fades, and a love that never grows cold for you. Amen.