Arise from Darkness

When Life Doesn’t Make Sense

Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R.

Arise from Darkness

1. Humans cannot answer the question “Why did God do it?” In fact, it is rarely a question, but rather “a cry of pain in the form of prayer” that is “half bewilderment and often tinged with rage. . . .This outraged cry to the mysterious God is often the most sincere and attentive prayer that many people ever offer” (12). The solution, not the answer, is found in the Gospel, in the lives of great saints, and in the lives of very brave ordinary people.

How can we look to God, the Gospel, the saints, and ordinary people to guide us through the mystery of loss and evil?

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2. The Big Lie is that life can be lived without encountering times of darkness. This illusion can be created by media, education, and general attitudes, or even by our religious thinking (17).

How can we accept the reality of darkness but greet it with optimism and the hope of future light?

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When Friends Fail

1. Jesus predicted the absence, betrayal, and failure of his friends, his disciples. In his Passion, Christ experienced every sorrow that can come to human beings (23).

How, in recognition of this shared experience of suffering, can we grow closer to Christ?

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2. “We all change. Our interests change. Our desires change. Our energies change . . . Things change, people move away, circumstances arise, and change takes place” (24).

In what ways can we pray to God to help us accept the reality of change? As things change with time, how can we look to our unchanging God, who dwells in eternity, for the guidance to navigate life’s changes?

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When Our Security Is Threatened

1. When he walked the earth, Jesus had little to no security. From the beginning, he did not have the luxury of security—after all, Joseph was warned in a dream: “Get up, and take the child [Jesus] . . . and go as fast as you can into Egypt . . . for Herod will soon be looking for the child to kill him” (Mt 2:13).

How can we take heart by looking at Jesus’s path, one of danger and insecurity?

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2. Jesus actively discouraged feelings of security. Do I covet security? Do I interpret “trust in God” as “everything is going to work out the way I want it to”? How can I reinterpret it to mean that God will be with me always? How can I believe, truly believe, that God is with me? How can I better accept the uncertainties along the way? Do I think and act like I deserve security, even when Christ did not have it?

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When the Church Lets Us Down

1. When Church leaders fail us, it is not our Divine Savior who fails us. Humans stumble, fall, and hurt—not God. The Church is made up of human beings with Original Sin.

Are my reactions rooted, consciously or unconsciously, in a belief that humans—especially humans in the Church—are perfect? How can I remind myself that only God is the Perfect One? How can I realize that the human side of the Church can be both incredibly healing and incredibly hurtful?

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2. Jesus was let down by earthly members of the Church—he was even betrayed by his own disciples.

**How can my similar experiences of betrayal or disappointment bring me closer to God? In what ways can I look to Jesus to let love overtake my bitterness?**

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When We Are Our Own Worst Enemies

1. We are supposed to step out in faith, but we are to take common sense with us. However, we ought not to overthink things in an excess of caution to the point that we end up sitting down instead of stepping out.

**How can I balance faith and forethought, courage and caution? How can I pray to God to help me seek out this balance?**

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2. Salvation is the only task that we have set before us that will last forever. After all, “what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and to forfeit his life?” (Mk 8:36).

**Do I organize my life around eternal salvation or fleeting worldliness? Am I mindful of how I follow the law of God? Do I knowingly (or unknowingly) interpret the law of God in such a way as to make it meaningless? How can I honor and uphold the true meaning of God’s law? Do I try to fit God into my life, molding the law based on convenience or preference?**

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When Death Robs Us

1. Life is filled with mysteries—love, sorrow, joy, darkness, and the incredibly mysterious eternity.

**How can I respond to this mystery with humbled prayer? And how can Jesus’s experience with death—a painful death—further humble me? When death humbles me, empties me, how can I be reminded that I ought to look to God—through prayer—to fill me up?**

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2. Death teaches us not to cling to anything in such a way that we cannot go on without it.

*Do my actions reflect a belief in God’s eternity, or do I act as if this earthly and temporal life is forever?*

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**What Do We Do When Everything Falls Apart**

1. The martyrs of the Church proclaim the message that all believers must hold on to their faith in the worst situations. They also show us that God brings good out of evil.

*How can we pray to God and be inspired by the Church’s martyrs to realize that the loss of life is not always the ultimate disaster, that God can bring good out of evil? When things fall apart, do we trust God enough to fully rely on him? Do we recognize that a time of darkness is a time for faith?*

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2. Ultimately, our salvation came through the murder of the Messiah—by God’s choice.

*How can I look at the reality of the Cross to know that God can bring joy out of sorrow, hope out of despair, life out of death, and eternity out of time?*

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