

Aldrick Monteiro Is There Anyone Out There (Part 4) 23 September 2005  
You know, in my experience if one has never suffered, then one cannot fully relate to those who suffer. Prior to my breakdown in 1972 at the age of seventeen, I was a high-flyer. Ambitious, a high achiever, hell bent and raring to go. With the benefit of hindsight, I know that my subsequent breakdown and continual suffering slowed me down both physically and mentally.

It made me over the years, less selfish and more considerate towards other people. I can relate to suffering humanity if I want to. I can be very giving if I want to be. I can feel for people in a way which if I didn't have my breakdown, I couldn't do so as much. I am not advocating that one should have nervous breakdowns, but one of the more positive effects of my schizophrenic illness was that it made me more humane.

I have had a lot to think about for the last thirty-three years since I first broke down. I have this Catholic Faith which I focus upon. It gives me a reason to live. I cannot live without the Mass, Holy Communion and Prayer. For the same length of time that I have been ill, I have been strong in the Faith. I cannot just exist on constant medication, hospitals, doctors and day centres to get me through this life. These are necessary and vital, but there must be a spiritual dimension to my life, which gives my life meaning.

I have always been a Roman Catholic but until I became ill, I never took it seriously. In June 1972, about a week before I ended up in hospital as an inpatient, I had a vision of the Holy Spirit in my bedroom. It appeared as a Golden Dove, which spread the length of the wall, at about 2 o'clock in the morning. It gave me some of its Grace. A week later I was hospitalized for about two months. I never forgot that experience, and to this day it is impressed indelibly on my mind. I came out of hospital determined not to waste this experience, and I made a few personal decisions of my own.

I decided that I would attend Mass more regularly and with attention, not just on Sundays. I would receive Holy Communion every time I went to Mass as an act of Faith. I would pray often and every day if I could. Remember, I had just taken a battering which would reverberate in my mind and body for many years to come.

I was on constant medication which made me very drowsy and lethargic, particularly initially when I first became ill. I had no mentor which I could look up to for spiritual help and inspiration. I was also very young and did everything instinctively, trusting in God for all my needs. I had the basics to work on, and this held me in good stead.

Suffering? Schizophrenia? Why do we have to go through this hell? For what purpose? Is there a good enough reason why we have to go through all

this pain? Well, personally I think there is. In this life we are tested, for a greater life in heaven. We are put through the misery of any suffering, to eventually get to the other side. And we are never alone. God is always there with us, 24/7 to see us through these testing times. We have to exercise our faith by being humble before God, and trusting him in every iota of our lives.

In other words we have to build up our relationship with him while we are on earth. And remember. The pain we go through in this life, does not compare with the happiness that will be ours in heaven. These conclusions are my own personal musings, ideas that I have carried with me for years, and that is how I justify my sufferings. God is Good and he wants all Men to be saved, and suffering of any kind is the Gateway to Eternal Life.

Finally, I would just like to say that after suffering for all these years with mental illness, it does not get any easier. You could say that I am fighting for my survival. However, even though the struggle is difficult, my faith is stronger than it has ever been. It seems that God and I rise up to the occasion to fight this affliction with all our strength. And I know that I will win this fight because with God all things are possible. God Bless.

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