

Blessings in Burdens

Early on a Sunday morning, I opened the church and discovered a monstrous mess of broken glass all over the sanctuary.

A large spotlight suspended from the ceiling 90 feet above had torn loose and crashed onto the altar.

It was a burdensome task to clean up swiftly, before Mass began, countless shattered pieces of glass scattered around the sanctuary.

Later I realized what a blessing it was that this crash happened in the darkness of the night and not in the middle of the service. Had it occurred otherwise, someone could have been killed (perhaps me) and many seriously injured.

Teddy Roosevelt, as a young member of the New York State legislature, passionately wanted to be elected its Speaker and earnestly campaigned for the position. His election seemed certain, but opposing political forces entered the picture and another person was chosen.

At first Roosevelt felt chagrined and depressed by this sudden negative turn of events. Then his mood improved. He realized the burden was really a blessing and that he could actually accomplish much more than if he had been elected Speaker.

Spiritual suggestion:

Recall an experience in your life in which a burden proved to be a blessing in disguise.

God's Word:

How lovely your dwelling,
O LORD of hosts!
My soul yearns and pines
for the courts of the LORD.
My heart and flesh cry out
for the living God.
As the swallow finds a home
and the swallow a nest to settle her young,
My home is by your altars,
LORD of hosts, my king and my God!

PSALM 84:2-4

Developing Our Gifts

Sir James Galway grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he mastered the pennywhistle as a young child. Later, at several single flute competitions, Galway won first prize and then decided to pursue music as his life's career.

That meant, however, years of hard work and study, beginning as a piano tuner. He subsequently studied musical theory and perfected his skills in London, Paris, and the United States.

That work and study produced great results. Galway has recorded more than fifty albums, performed throughout the world, and been honored by the Queen of England.

A sold-out audience gave Sir James and the Syracuse Symphony standing ovations not only at the end, but several times during the concert.

God blessed Galway with a great gift. But he has developed that talent through hard work—much to the delight of millions.

Spiritual suggestion:

Have you worked hard to use well and to develop fully a unique gift God has bestowed upon you?

God's Word:

How can I repay the LORD
for all the good done for me?
I will raise the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.

PSALM 116:12-14

Starting Over

I have always loved spring.

The days are longer and the weather warmer.

Trees suddenly sprout beautiful leaves, and seeds planted in the ground emerge as living plants.

The grass grows rapidly and birds start chirping at daylight.

The darkness and death of winter have yielded to the light and life of spring.

Spring gives most people an emotional lift. But it also can give us a spiritual lesson.

The lesson is about letting go, starting over, beginning again.

As a lover of sports, I learned over the years that the best athletes are those who do not rest on their laurels or fret over their mistakes. They do not reflect upon a great play or brood over a bad one. They simply move on to the next challenge.

Spring and sports can teach us how to live our lives, by letting go, starting over, and beginning again.

Spiritual suggestion:

Ask yourself: Do I have a constant and unhealthy tendency to rest upon my laurels or fret over my mistakes instead of moving on?

God's Word:

Whenever I lay down and slept,
the LORD preserved me to rise again.

PSALM 3:6