



Suffering and Blessings

By Stephanie Harakal

When I woke up this morning, I was so stiff it was hard to get out of bed. I forced myself to do my exercises even though it was difficult and somewhat painful to do so because I knew that doing them will make it easier to move. Each day, I am capable of doing a little more – a more difficult exercise, walking with a cane some of the time instead of always using a walker, learning to fully dress myself, etc.

I should tell you that a little more than a week ago, I had a total hip replacement. During this recovery, my aches and pains are worse than they were before the surgery, but I know that when I am fully recovered, I will be able to resume my previous activities pain free. Before the operation, I was able to do everything I needed to do by myself. Since the surgery, I need assistance with many of the everyday things I used to be able to do with ease and I look forward to resuming my usual activities with my former abilities.

What dealing with this recovery period has impressed upon me is the difficulties that truly handicapped people have to deal with on an ongoing basis. I don't know how this realization will affect my life, but I hope that I never lose that sense of empathy with the handicapped. I also hope that I will remember to thank God for all the things I am able to do rather than to dwell on any negatives in my life.

It's now three weeks post-surgery and I'm doing much better. I have out-patient physical therapy three times a week and I am recovered enough to drive myself to therapy. I use the cane rather than the walker most of the time and I'm sleeping better at night.

While this period of surgery and recovery has entailed a lot of aches and pains and restrictions, it also has been such a blessing to me. It took more than two weeks of preparations for the operation, but I was able to include holy communion, confession, and anointing of the sick before I entered the hospital. The operation took place on Ash Wednesday and I was able to get my ashes in the hospital before the surgery. The surgeon and all the hospital personnel were wonderful.

My friends in the Legion of Mary Auxiliary and my "sisters" in the Catholic Women of Zion have stormed heaven with prayers and masses for me. One friend even brought over a dish of baked ziti and garlic bread! Another friend who had a hip replaced last fall loaned me a bunch of her equipment.

And I can't forget my daughter who lives in South Carolina. She drove up the day before my surgery and stayed for two and a half weeks. She has been wonderful, helping with the wash, changing the beds, fixing supper, going shopping, etc., etc., etc. I really miss her now that she has returned home, but before she left, she helped me reach a point where we both knew that I am able to manage with a little help from my husband and possibly some of my other children.

I don't think I ever realized how much I mean to other people in my life, and I am humbled by their response at this difficult time. It reminds me how much a simple word or gesture can mean, and I will try to incorporate more "giving moments" to others in my life in the future. I am truly blessed and I will work to be a blessing to others.



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