

In the Epistle to the Romans -- which we're reading this summer -- St. Paul describes the work of the Holy Spirit in creation. He says that creation and we – *GROAN in eager longing* as we wait patiently for *our completion as sons and daughters of God*.

Meaning we're complete when we're *AT ONE WITH and IN the spirit*. Paul concludes his treatise on the spirit by saying: "*All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.*"

By that Paul doesn't mean that all things ARE good. What he means is that God has the power to USE all things FOR good. At Easter, the empty tomb shows us everything we need to know about the power of God to use all things for good.

This prayer composed by a Holocaust victim before his death puts it different way. I heard it sung by a dear friend after her son had committed suicide. I'll never forget it. The prayer/song goes:

"I believe in the sun even when it's not shining.
I believe in love even when feeling it not.
I believe in God even when God is silent."

What the author saying is: we don't know HOW or WHEN the spirit will work. We only know THAT the Holy Spirit will work and WHEN the spirit works ---- it will be for our ultimate good. That knowledge is the wellspring of our hope and the source of new life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Crucial note here: "good" doesn't mean everything will be "honky-dory!" Life teaches us that! Rather, it means that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus. It means when we're sinking – as the gospel tells us – God's hand will reach out to hold us and we'll hear Jesus tell us, "*Do not be afraid!*"

See the Holy Spirit is always knitting – sometimes *fast* --- sometimes *very slowly* – with stitches seeming to unravel all over the place. Case in point: Eric the coach driver.

I may have spoken here before about my 2005 pilgrimage to the UK. It was memorable – on it we visited 15 locations in 17 days so we spent lots of time on the bus (The British call them coaches). From the onset, we included Eric, the driver, as a member of our group.

From the start, Eric announced that *he didn't believe in God*. As things unfolded, we discovered that his *unbelief developed after his young sister died from Leukemia*.

Eric also told us that after a hurtful and disastrous first marriage ---- *he would never marry again*. As things progressed, we heard about Janice, the love of his life with whom he had been living for seven years.

Naturally, the women all started the, “*So when's the wedding*” talk.

Eric was adamant. “*I'm never getting married again.*” We did the old: “*never say never.*”

Here's the good news: *somewhere on that long ride – Eric allowed himself to be open to the spirit*. One night towards the end of the pilgrimage, the most observant person among us said – “*Eric looks different.*” Sure enough --- *he did – he actually looked different*.

That night Eric started talking about his faith. In fact, incredibly -- he began to take on a leadership *offering heartfelt mini - reflections over the coach microphone!!* (To the chagrin of our pilgrimage leader.....)

As Eric's faith was made new – I swear I could hear the sound of the *Holy Spirit knitting feverishly --- healing his heart and mind*.

The last night in our group reflections, *Eric talked about God and the many blessings God had given him.* He asked God to bless us all and proposed to Janice -- who accepted with joy..... *never say never!*

But enough about Eric ---what about us.... We want to know --- *can God really bring new life from the empty tombs of our pain? Can God unscramble eggs? Can God really knit the broken scraps of our lives into whole cloth?* The quick answer is: *"never say never!"*

One of my favorite saints is *Julian of Norwich.* She's a fourteenth century anchoress and mystic who lived in the midst of the bubonic plague, which killed half of Norwich in her lifetime.

The spirit revealed many things to Julian. Here's one:
"I, God, am in all things. I never remove my hands from my works, nor ever shall. How then should anything be amiss?" How indeed!

Here's the point: in our weakness – when we *groan* inwardly –when we are so far gone we don't know *WHAT* to pray or *HOW* to pray ---*if we put ourselves in the Spirit's presence -- the Holy Spirit will intercede for us and knit us into a new creation.*

Here's what you need to remember: when the sun isn't shining and God seems silent, *recall* Eric and Julian of Norwich. Then *listen* for the sound of cosmic knitting, and *know:* *"All things work together for good for those who love God..... who are called according to his purpose."* Amen