Refection By: Deacon Paul V. Hursh

"The dragnet is a familiar symbol in our parish. The net motif was chosen as our symbol because of our patron, Saint Andrew, was a fisherman. The net is a metaphor for the kingdom of heaven in one of today's Gospel parables. Because a dragnet gathers all fish, good and bad, it can be a challenging metaphor for God's kingdom. Perhaps it is disturbing because it challenges us in the same way as life itself. We often ask, "Why does God allow evil in the world?" Why indeed! If God is a benevolent god, then why does He allow suffering and injustice? This question can challenge one's faith... as only suffering can.

After pondering suffering and weakness in the world, St. Paul concludes that God's Spirit persists in the travails of life. In trust, Paul affirms that there is good even in the midst of suffering when he writes, "...all things work for good for those who love God..." (Romans 8:28b) The fact that we suffer in the present confirms that the Christian vocation, as God designed it, is to be conformed to the image of his Son. This is a vocation that chooses to be a positive generative force in the world even in the midst of opposition by those who oppose..."
God's purpose. This was the path that Jesus chose and what God worked for good, a cross that becomes our greatest grace. The image of God who chose to suffer with us and never abandons us. But why must this suffering persist until the end?

Like the weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13: 24-33) we may wonder why we need to suffer the bad fish with the good in the present age. The answer is that we are unfit to distinguish right from wrong as we await our own redemption and transformation. Like Solomon, in the first reading, we should pray to God for the gift of wisdom. Pray that God will grant us an understanding heart to see the wisdom of patience and the value of necessary suffering. Then our suffering will be joined with the suffering that St. Paul referred to when he wrote, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church." (Colossians 1:24) The wisdom of this is when we share in the work of Christ by service to the poor; our sufferings are joined to His and we also participate in the redemption of the world. Practically speaking we become a sign and the vehicle of God's love and that God has not abandoned the world but responds to our needs in real and material ways. In the end, it is up to God to sort the fish, ours is to allow ourselves to be caught up in this net where everything belongs - we call it the kingdom of heaven.