



Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you...for God makes his sun rise on the bad and the good.

MATTHEW 5:44-45A

## Like a Sponge

FR. JOSEPH JUKNIALIS

**T**o turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile, to love one's enemy, all of that is to absorb and thus stop the evil that can saturate life. When we do that, then evil ends with us, lest it keep escalating like a tsunami that overwhelms life.

Is anyone really willing to absorb the evils of life? Many are. Parents do who walk the floor at night with a crying infant or care for a child sick with a cold and then find themselves suffering the same illness. They absorb the evil in order to bring some comfort and so ease the child's pain. Someone does as well who listens endlessly to a lonely person on the phone or over a cup of coffee. They absorb the loneliness even as it tests their own patience. Those who protest injustice by participating in nonviolent demonstrations and then find themselves mistreated or even dealt with violently, they absorb the hate of others.

"Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2), says the Lord to Moses. Absorbing the evils of life is a different sort of holiness, different than saying more prayers or giving up enjoyments during Lent. Part of our tradition is to do penance during the season of Lent. Perhaps this year a penance might be to become conscious of each day's opportunities to simply absorb someone's suffering, another's pain, a bit of the evil that so often ricochets through our days, always doing so in the image of Jesus. ●

### Reflect

***When have you ever suffered as you absorbed someone else's pain?***

