



Through Her Eyes: A Journey of Goodness and Self-Surrender in Illness

I remembered it well, the day my world shifted: it was the 9th of December 2023, when the doctor came to my hospital bedside and explained in great detail, that I had a 9.5 cm tumor growing in my right kidney, and that it was very likely malignant. My world shifted not so much because of this news, but because I started to pray the Act of Oblation, the prayer of Self-Surrender in a profoundly radical way. Then, 11 days later, as I waited in the cold and antiseptic Operating Room where my right kidney was about to be surgically removed, the last thought and prayer on my mind before I lost consciousness was Mother Thérèse' Self-Surrender, and the lines from the Principle and Foundation: "neither health nor sickness, neither long life nor short life."

Events unraveled rapidly after my surgery: the devastating diagnosis of stage 3 kidney cancer, the recuperation from surgery, immunotherapy treatments every three weeks, the clockwork frequency of blood tests, urinalysis, ultrasound tests, and CT scan. Life was radically altered and letting go of ministry was particularly painful. Yet through this shadowed time, God never left me to suffer alone. Luminous graces and consolations shone through the darkness. Mother Thérèse and Father Terme were constantly at my side, gently strengthening me to live through this time with courage and faith that are their gifts to me as their daughter in the Cenacle.

And yet, this was not the first time that I entered this shadowed valley of illness. In November 2014 I was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder. In depression, that free-fall into despair, I clung to the belief in the Goodness of God. At my utter lowest and darkest, when I was in the grip of despair and planned to end my life, the thought came to me, unbidden

and crystal clear in the murkiness of my suicidal mind: *how can I do this to God who has been so good to me?* That thought alone, stayed my hand. The Goodness of God saved my life. It also deepened this conviction that no matter what happens to me, God's goodness will prevail, and my life, with all its faults and fractures, is essentially good.

I recovered from depression, and returning to a busy life, thought that my experience of depression would be the greatest arc of my life, the defining moment of my ongoing conversion. Yes, it was. Until cancer came along and brought with it profound graces. Among these graces, three stood out. These were moments of both Goodness and Self-Surrender, moments when I could see my life through the eyes of Mother Thérèse:

On March 19, 2024, I received the results of my CT scan, which revealed “non-calcified nodules” in my lungs, and therefore “cannot exclude metastasis in the area of primary malignancy.” I was devastated. Weeping in prayer, I surrendered my life to God again, praying; “Lord, let this cup pass from me, but not my will but your will be done.” I could not have prayed those words nor surrendered myself if I did not believe that God was endlessly Good, even in this desolation. That prayer allowed me to dry my tears, and live the moment, as best as I could.

Then on May 5, 2024, I received a singular gift in prayer, a gift that is difficult to explain. This gift is the graced insight that I am dying. Whether it is a matter of months or years, cancer has stripped me of the illusion of endless days. There was a certain clarity that came with this realization. I have been gifted with a precious gift: the chance not to waste my time, but to seize each day, with joy and gratitude, and to live each day like it was my last. Now that I know that I am dying, I want to live the rest of my life with renewed purpose, with integrity, with the love of God flowing into a life of loving-kindness to all I meet. I was filled with awe and gratitude at this gift, and given my history of depression, this truly was grace.

The third gift came on December 11, 2024. While praying Matthew 11: 28-30, Jesus invited me to see that the yoke he was offering was to experience cancer as a grace and a gift. Cancer, by itself, is not from God, but Jesus has taken it upon himself now—for a yoke is put on two beasts of burden—and together, he and I will pass through this valley of darkness in the shadow of death. With him I am never alone, and therefore my cancer which he has taken upon himself and made into his yoke, is made easy and light, because of him. My heart was filled with awe and a singular joy, which echoed Mother Thérèse's words about self-surrender, that “nothing is so sweet to practice,” because it was an invitation from the Lord: will you let this cancer be *my* yoke, Cecille? Will you allow me to put this on the *two* of us?”

God reminds me, every now and then, that these graces do not end with me, but are meant to be shared with others. Words fall short, and yet I am invited to live out what he already

revealed to me in my depression: that I witness an amazingly Good God, a God who walks with us, reassuring us: *Pas sans toi*, not without you.

Sister Cecille Tube, Asia