



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

ROOTED IN CHRIST

LENT 2022



STICK WITH IT *Saturday*

My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Ezekiel 37:27



Today is stick with it Saturday.

Why stick with God and practice the faith of the Church?

I know to be a good Catholic I should say I will stick with it. But all too often, in my heart I doubt, and I don't stick with it.

My daughter Katie suffered with a serious mental illness, and she died by suicide – I prayed for her, but still she died. It was a horrible way for her to die. Why did this happen I cried? I have doubted if God heard my prayers or even cared. Why should I stick with going to Church and praying?

I have struggled with my own personal temptations and sins and wonder if they will ever stop. Like the Apostle Paul, there is a “thorn in my flesh” that seems to never go away completely. Why should I continue to fight it? Why should I stick with going to confession?

Why should I stick with going to confession?

[Today's readings for the fifth Saturday of Lent](#) are about people saying one thing but doing another. They are about doubt and the failure of people to stick with it.

In the first reading Ezekiel talks about the people of ancient Israel who “defile themselves with their idols, their abominations, and all their transgressions.” In their arrogance and pride, they turned away from God and from their faith. They decided it was not worth sticking with the commandments of God.

In the Gospel of John, the people decide that although they may like some things about Christ and they were impressed with the miracles he performed, all things considered they thought it would be better for them if he was no longer around. They felt that by sticking with Christ and following His teachings, they would risk losing some of their wealth and power. They decided it was not worth it to stick with Christ.

What I see in today's readings is that the people of ancient Israel and the people from the time of Christ were much like me – they doubted and could not stick with it. They thought it would be better to get Christ out of the way so that He would not challenge them. They abandoned Him and let Him be crucified.

They knew what the right thing was to do, but they felt it was just too difficult to resist their temptations. So, they decided not to stick with God.

Despite my doubts brought on by grief, despite my persistent sinfulness, despite my weakness and inability to stick with God, I know God has not abandoned me.

Yet, despite all of this, out of love - God stuck with them.

Despite all their doubts, despite their turning away from God, despite their letting Christ be crucified, God said "I will deliver them from all their sins ... and cleanse them so that they may be my people and I may be their God."

Despite my doubts brought on by grief, despite my persistent sinfulness, despite my weakness and inability to stick with God, I know God has not abandoned me.

Knowing that God will stick with me is my sure and certain hope. God has sustained me in my grief. God has forgiven me and lifted the weight of my sins from my shoulders every single time I have experienced the sacrament of penance.

God has shown me, and everyone, that even in death He does not abandon us. Out of His never-ending love for us, He too suffered a horrible death but rose to new life to lead us to everlasting joy.

I know the Lord's promise is true. God has stuck with me.

God will always stick with you.



Ed Shoener was ordained a permanent deacon in 2004 and serves at St. Peter's Cathedral in Scranton. He is a founding member of the [Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers](#) and the Catholic Institute of Mental Health Ministry at the University of San Diego, and serves on the Council on Mental Illness of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability and on the Board of Pathways to Promise, an interfaith cooperative that facilitates the faith community's work in reaching out to those with mental illnesses and their families. Deacon Shoener, along with Bishop John Dolan, is coauthor of the books *Responding to Suicide: A Pastoral Handbook for Catholic Leaders* and *When a Loved One Dies by Suicide* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN).

FOR REFLECTION

1. How has God stuck with you in grief and sorrow?
2. How has God stuck with you when you sinned and failed?
3. Who do you know that is doubting if God has stuck with them?
How can you help them know that they are not abandoned by God?
4. How does your faith in the resurrection let you see that when you die, God will cleanse you and stick with you?

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