

Lebanon is a word that triggers shivers and feelings of warmth mixed with languishment in its expatriates, as well as waves of resentment and anger in its residents. Despite occasional periods of unsubstantial stability, our beloved country has been in constant turmoil for many decades that culminated in this ponderous meltdown on all tiers. These are instances when things are not going right and when anything that can happen will happen. We have been damaged emotionally, physically, spiritually, struggling to protect our loved ones, sustain our businesses, and salvage our financial savings that are the product of our hard work. All these struggles brought many of us to the excruciating interrogation of whether to leave or to stay, and to fight or to flight.

What do we do when suffering seems unbearable? What do we do when our pain seems insignificant? Some people find it easier to just surrender, lay vain and allow things to go their way. They are inevitably victims of circumstances and allow themselves to be typecast into a perpetual role of nothingness.

Martha Washington once said that “The greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions and not on our circumstances.” So instead of despairing, we should cling to that fundamental quality, faith, because on the other facet of our ache there is a light that would soon break the darkness. It is not what we go through that determines where we end up; these present circumstances might be a page in our lives or even a chapter, but they should better not be the entire book. All of this will definitely leave a mark, but it can be the sign of victory given that it is the overcoming of the hardships that produces the blessing. The very fact that we are nonetheless here today is a testament to the reality that the devil hasn’t been able to destroy us. Hence, we should not look at ourselves as being in a storm right now, but rather in between two miracles.

Joyce Meyer says that “Courage is fear that has said its prayers and decided to go forward, anyway.” So, the question is, how will we move forward and what are we going to do with what we have? The question does not boil down to how much we have. Some of us have patience, others kindness, love, the gift of long-suffering, or whatever our gift is. Les Brown, a motivational speaker, made an analogy about this and said: “Imagine you’re on your deathbed and standing around you are the ghosts representing your unfulfilled potential, the ghosts of the ideas you never acted on, the ghosts of the talents you didn’t use, and they’re standing around your bed angry, disappointed and upset. They say: we came to you because you could have brought us to life, and now we have to go to the grave together. So, how many ghosts are going to be around your bed when your time comes?”

Therefore, we are invited to instill the Ignatian way in our daily lives, this very foundation on which our beloved USJ has been built upon, and actively enter the struggle for a more just society. As “Contemplatives in Action”, we will engage in the practice of prayer, reflection, and discernment in the context of our faith and value. A USJ member must be a distinguished but humble epitome who responds to the wisdom in his/her lived experiences and chooses the action that contributes to the common good for the Greater Glory of God; thereby, we are called for competence, conscience, compassion, commitment and the manifestation of the spirit of excellence in all its endeavors.

Ultimately, as we crawl up and out of that traumatic and wretched place we are stuck in, and as we climb higher than we were and take the form of whom we are supposed to be, we see that in the very act of standing up and fighting on, that renders us “unbroken”. Thus, as Denzel Washington points out, “Let us not aspire to make a living, but aspire to make a difference”, so that our future generations can live in a country far better than the one we have today.