

## Resources: Print and Film

### Literature Resources and Excerpts on the Virtue of Faithfulness

#### **1. An Excerpt from *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Harold S. Kushner**

Harold Kushner talks about the faith in God that enables us to cope with afflictions and tragedies. This classic work challenges us to make meaning out of suffering and loss. Here is an excerpt on God's presence in the tragedies and catastrophes of life.

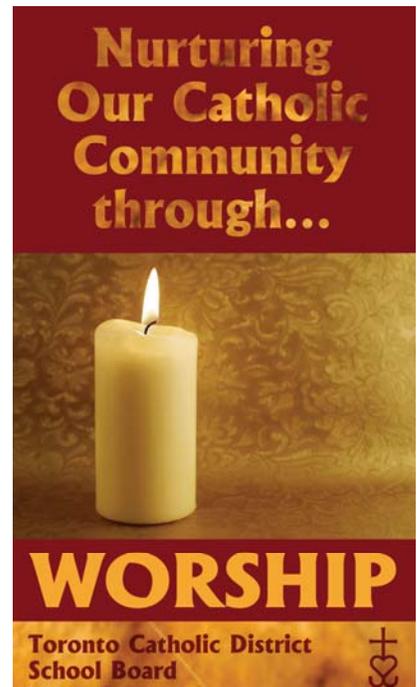
*"The heart attack which slows down a forty-six-year-old businessman does not come from God, but the determination to change his life-style, to stop smoking, to care less about expanding his business and care more about spending time with his family, because his eyes have been opened to what is truly important to him — those things come from God. God does not stand for heart attacks; those are nature's responses to the body's being overstressed. But God does stand for self-discipline and for being part of a family.*

*"The flood that devastates a town is not an 'act of God,' even if the insurance companies find it useful to call it that. But the efforts people to make save lives, to risk their own lives for a person who might be a total stranger to them, and the determination to rebuild their community after the flood waters have receded, do qualify as acts of God.*

*"When a person is dying of cancer, I do not hold God responsible for the cancer or for the pain he feels. They have other causes. But I have seen God give such people the strength to take each day as it comes, to be grateful for a day full of sunshine or one in which they are relatively free of pain.*

*"When people who were never particularly strong become strong in the face of adversity, when people who tended to think only of themselves became unselfish and heroic in an emergency, I have to ask myself where they got these qualities which they freely admit they did not have before. My answer is that this is one of the ways in which God helps us when we suffer beyond the limits of our own strength.*

*"Life is not fair. The wrong people get sick and the wrong people get robbed and the wrong people get killed in wars and in accidents. Some people see life's unfairness and decide, 'There is no God; the world is nothing but chaos.' Others see the same unfairness and ask themselves, 'Where do I get my sense of what is fair and what is unfair? Where do I get my sense of outrage*



*and indignation, my instinctive response of sympathy when I read in the paper about a total stranger who has been hurt by life? Don't I get these things from God? Doesn't He plant in me a little bit of His own divine outrage at injustice and oppression, just as He did for the prophets of the Bible? Isn't my feeling of compassion for the afflicted just a reflection of the compassion He feels when He sees the suffering of His creatures?' Our responding to life's unfairness with sympathy and with righteous indignation, God's compassion and God's anger working through us, may be the surest proof of all of God's reality."*

## **2. Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience by Sharon Salzberg**

Buddhist meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg makes some distinctions between the meaning of faith and belief. Meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg melds incidents from her life and Buddhist teachings to re-imagine this important human faculty.

### **An Excerpt from *Faith*:**

*"When we hold a belief too tightly, it is often because we are afraid. We become rigid, and chastise others for believing the wrong things without really listening to what they are saying. We become defensive and resist opening our minds to new ideas or perspectives. This doesn't mean that all beliefs are accurate reflections of the truth, but it does mean that we have to look at what's motivating our defensiveness. . . .*

*"With their assumptions of correctness, beliefs try to make a known out of the unknown. They make presumptions about what is yet to come, how it will be, what it will mean, and how it will affect us. Faith, on the other hand, doesn't carve out reality according to our preconceptions and desires. It doesn't decide how we are going to perceive something but rather is the ability to move forward even without knowing. Faith, in contrast to belief, is not a definition of reality, not a received answer, but an active, open state that makes us willing to explore. While beliefs come to us from outside — from another person or tradition or heritage — faith comes from within, from our active participation in the process of discovery. Writer Alan Watts summed up the difference simply and pointedly as, 'Belief clings, faith lets go.'"*

## **Film Resources**

### 1. Romero

*John Duigan*

A riveting drama about the radicalization of a moderate Catholic priest as he is exposed to the violence and suffering in El Salvador.

2. Agnes of God

*Norman Jewison*

A well-acted and soul-stirring drama about miracles and the clash between reason and faith.

3. Chariots of Fire

*Hugh Hudson*

The true stories of two young men who become champions at the 1924 Paris Olympics and their religious commitments