

# GOD'S CHOCOLATE FUDGE

OR

Bearing One Another's Burdens

Part One

by

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My pastoral duties as a bishop often take me through Pennsylvania. I always marvel at the picture-perfect farms in the countryside of Susquehanna County. The neatly plowed fields, the freshly-painted silos, the well-kept yards and fences are always a pleasure to behold.

Another thing that I like to do in Pennsylvania is to read the signs posted in front of the Protestant churches that dot the landscape. Most of the messages are pretty ordinary, others have interesting quotations from the Gospel, and some are genuine prizewinners.

Some of them have something to say about parish life.

Having in mind the many vicissitudes of life in a parish, and how each of us comes to church every Sunday and on feast days with our burdens of family, or business, or school, or occupational concerns, we know that our clergy will have to hear it all or deal with it all, in one way or another. Frequently, the clergy are the shoulders we can cry on, but they are human too. Like the rest of us, they, too, have their burdens to bear, and sometimes — again, like the rest of us — they are successful at dealing with their problems, and sometimes they are less successful.

The long and short of it is that we need one another to get along in this life, and to prepare adequately for the next. No one has all the talents, but each of us has talents that others lack. If we put our heads together and work as a body, many wonderful things are accomplished. When we work together in Christ, and in humility, we are faced with *insurmountable possibilities*.

But we have to bear one another's burdens. We have to understand that each of us has limitations, flaws, and weaknesses. When we are of one heart, however, we find that all those flaws tend to get white-washed and covered by our common forbearance, and we are able to achieve the goal: our eternal salvation.

The Greeks have a proverb: "Love your friends with all their flaws."

Since God loves us with all our flaws — or despite them — He obviously knows something we don't. He knows, for example, that if we are patient with ourselves (and with others), there is a good chance we may correct our flaws finally and do the right thing. If "hope springs eternal in the human breast," why should we be downcast or discouraged over a setback, or a slip or two? We can always help one another get up again and resume the struggle.

But forbearance of one another is the key, especially in our local parishes, where we gather together to worship God, partake of His Body and Blood, confess our failings to our priests, seek holy instruction and guidance, and learn to love one another with all our flaws. In a parish, we have all that we need to be saved, including all the spiritual props *and the challenges*.

Which brings me back to Pennsylvania. During one visit, as we were driving through the beautiful countryside, I saw a sign in front of a Baptist church which caught my eye.

It read:

***Our congregation is like  
chocolate fudge:  
mostly sweet, with a few nuts.***

So, what's wrong with having a few nuts in the fudge?

God loves them, even as He loves us — with, or despite, all our flaws.