

Archie and Edith brought their baby home, their first, a girl. A few days later, Edith's Mom and sister went home. And there she was, alone with her baby. She never thought she would be so busy. And so tired. But she loved it. After all, this was her baby. Two weeks went by. Between the feeding, changing, holding, napping and crying, the baby's mostly, she has this horrible feeling. Edith can't tell her husband. She won't tell her mother. But the feeling is more than a thought. It is a reality. She whispers it to herself, "**I can't do this.**"

Edith's husband, Archie, has gone back to work. All seems to be going well for Archie. He loves holding the baby, playing with her, and is really quite good at caring for her including changing diapers. What he doesn't tell Edith is that he can't stand the reality that he isn't a youth anymore. The baby has brought a new demand into his life. He has to be mature. All those things that he spent so much energy on in college are remote history. Then he wonders if he will be able to provide all his family needs. He wonders if he will be able to pay the bills next month. For the first time in his life he faces pressure that will not go away after exams are taken. In the middle of the bouncing and holding, a doubt has formed. The doubt becomes a statement that he will not share with anyone. Still it is there. Within himself, he says, "**I can't do this.**"

Clark and Lois have been married for sixteen years. Children came and grew into play age. Now evenings and weekends are spent going to games and recitals, doing schoolwork, attending meetings, etc. All seemed well. All seemed normal. Sure their marriage had lost the wonder and excitement of its first years, and they have their disagreements, but they've learned how to work through them. They knew it was wrong to avoid some issues, but each knew that certain topics would bring reactions of upset rather than reason. Still, the women Lois knew seemed to have it so much easier. The other men Clark knew seemed to have much less stress. Then one of the children fell ill, seriously ill. Caring for this child, caring for the others, caring for each other added new levels of stress to their lives. And both the husband and wife said to themselves, **"I can't do this."**

Father Dave went from one assignment to another where he felt loved and respected. But those were easy assignments. At first he was a new priest that everyone helped. In those days his own gifts outshone his limitations. He went from place to place as he was assigned, even becoming a pastor of a small parish. And then he was sent to a large parish that had seen three pastors in four years. The people there had enough with new pastors. Many of them challenged everything he attempted. Every program had its

detractors. Every homily had its critics. Every week brought new unsigned mail that Father Dave refused to read, but whose existence still upset him. He kept plugging along, telling himself that he was sent to the parish for a reason that God knows and he might never know. Still as one battle followed another, the thought began to clarify itself. For the first time in his life he wondered, afraid even to state it. The thought kept coming to him, though. It was a simple thought, a horrible thought, one he never expected. The thought was, **“I can’t do this.”**

And the college students who try to live their faith in spite of all the times that they are told that all they avoided in high schools is acceptable in college, and the single man or woman who hold on to morality with both hands, all of these and so many more are tempted to say, **“I can’t do this.”**

“I can’t do this.” No, you can’t young mother, young father, older husband and wife, established priest, college student, single person. No, you can’t do it. At least, you can’t do it alone. But you are not asked to do it alone. You are not alone. You entered the marriage hoping to have a family with God as its center. You work hard to teach your children to make Christian choices. You chose the priesthood to serve God. And you are not alone. You are not alone. **God is with you.**

Listen to what St. Paul says in today's second reading. They are some of the most reassuring words in scripture. Listen to the Holy Spirit speaking through St. Paul in *Philippians 4:13*, commit these lines to memory and recite them throughout your lives: **"I can do all things in Him who strengthens me."**

Alone, I am not that good. Neither are you. But we are not alone. We have Jesus Christ. He gives us the Power of His Spirit to conquer what might seem insurmountable. The Power of the Cross is given to us to wage war on any evil that attacks us.

I **can** do it. You can do it. We **can** do all things in Him who strengthens us!