

Today's scripture readings are very different. They present a clear contrast between the Old Testament reading from the book of Job and our reading from the Gospel of Mark....Our friend Job, the poor guy, his life is dragging on, he is tired, restless, sleepless and without hope. He is mired in his own self pity. He needs an encounter with something larger than himself, and as you may remember God make that happen later in the book of Job.

The Gospel on the other hand is hopeful and quick moving, The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the three synoptic gospels, he doesn't spare many words in his story of the life of Jesus. gospels stories of Jesus traveling though Galilea healing people and driving out demons are so simple and spirit filled; simple descriptions of these miraculous lifting of burdens, these transformations that occur during an encounter with Jesus, give us hope— as we encounter Christ in our faith lives and in our sacraments.

I love the description of the healing of Simon mother in law. "He approached her, grasped her hand, and helped her up, and the fever left her." Nothing more from the Lord, no words or gestures, no need for a short prayer or blessing, nothing dramatic. Just a simple encounter. She

was healed by his presence. She was healed by his touch, a touch which is always healing, always a comfort, always a consolation.

This story, and actually all of Mark's gospel, is a testimony to the fact that Jesus is not only **preaching** the reign of God or the Kingdom of God as he calls it, but he's **making it so** with his actions.... he approached her, grasped her hand, and helped her up.

Our faith teaches us that our God is always approaching us, always pursuing us, until we get to a point in life where we turn to him. And for a lot of us those turning points are the toughest experiences of our lives. The most painful, the times when we may have the most in common with our friend Job. Overwhelming times, most of us have had them, -- I have...and **those times were the times** when Christ picked me up. It seems that for us, it needs to be one of those sharp experiences: a family crisis, an illness, some sort of accident, an addiction; for me it was an injury, something powerful enough to break through, to get through our egos; (that part of us that thinks we can do it alone) it has to be something powerful enough to get through these thick heads of ours, and make us realize that at his point in our lives we have no one to turn to but God.

Ernest Hemingway in one of his novels, wrote this line..... “Life breaks every one of us, and many are stronger in the broken places” That is so true!! , Many are stronger in the broken places. How does that work? How do we become stronger where we are broken? Well for a Christian that answer is easy. Because those are the places where we allow ourselves to encounter Christ.....we are finally vulnerable enough allow him in, to undergo his grace and his healing. In my work as a counselor we teach that the ability to be vulnerable is all about courage. and the people who are courageous are very comfortable with being vulnerable. We have to be in the right mental space to finally let Him in!

And isn't it wonderful to know that our God is with us in our pain, he is with us personally when we fall, **AND** he is with us in the support we show each other as the body of Christ. Father Rod Rolheiser said "I go to church so that other people might help me carry what is broken inside of me and so that I might help them carry what is broken inside of them." as Christians when we see one of our brother or sister struggling we approach them, grasp their hand, and help them up. And then, our faith is stronger for that encounter.

Our faith community is stronger when we encounter his presence through each other. What a hopeful reality. You know I was a person who was away from the church for some time and when I came back to the FAITH it was here, in Caribou, and I can remember standing in the back of the choir and being struck by the realization that mostly everyone here really wants to be here, and I am willing to say that is because most all of you have been touched in some way by Christ....maybe through the eucharist or reconciliation, or at adoration, or through the kindness of a fellow Christian.

So back to the Gospel, then, after word gets around about Simon's mother in law being healed they bring the sick and the broken people of the town, and the whole town is gathered at the door. They all want to watch what is about to happen. Some, looking to be blessed by his presence, hoping to be healed or consoled, comforted, loved. So I was thinking, here we are, the whole Catholic community of _____, this little piece of the universal body of Christ. Here we are gathered at the door to the tabernacle waiting for our weekly encounter with his presence. Waiting to be healed, consoled, comforted, and loved-- and at the same time healing, consoling, comforting, and loving each other as the body of Christ. What a hopeful

reality. You know every Friday morning this worship site offers Eucharistic adoration, and Every First Friday of the month we have adoration here from 6:30 to 7:30. These are opportunities provided by the parish for personal encounters with Christ.

How blessed we are to be Catholics in the day and age. What a beautiful and hopeful thing, To be part of this tradition that began two thousand years ago. Today allow him to approach each of us, rich or poor, old or young, employed or unemployed, fit or disabled, Take his hand, feel his presence, let him help you .