

**Homily Resources – 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time B Sunday Feb 4 2018**

Readings: 1<sup>st</sup> Job 7:1-4,6-7; Psalm 147; 2<sup>nd</sup> 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23; Gospel Mk 1:29-39.

**1. Central thought:** How can we be faithful to the work and calling of God while in the midst of pain, doubt, and suffering? It may well be that our suffering can bring much good to ourselves and others. Furthermore, suffering, when offered up to Jesus, can bring us closer to Him.

**2. First reading: Spiritual warfare brought on by the presence of Evil in the World.**

For the wager between God and Satan over Job's faith and righteousness see Job 1:1-12. This book raises the question of whether we will be faithful to God only if he blesses us with prosperity. Will we be faithful if all kinds of misfortune affect us, even when we are faithful? Are we but "fair weather Christians?" Our reading comes from Job's first reply; his reply to Eliphaz who has accused Job of being unrighteous, since God would never punish the righteous.

Job speaks of his life in dramatic and pessimistic terms. Under severe attack from Satan, he considers his life as a struggle, as slavery, as work which has been imposed upon him. He sees no hope, no improvement in the future. He refuses to accept guilt for evil that he has not done (6:28-30) but it appears that no improvement nor deliverance is possible. In reality, this writing deals with the expression of a heart afflicted by sadness, penetrated by suffering and which cries out to God from its own misery. Eventually, Job arrived at a place in his life where, in trust and in Faith, he surrendered himself, his suffering, his work and everything he had had and lost to the greater wisdom of God (Job 42:1-6). He was restored by persistent, humble faith in the midst of his suffering.

**3. Dealing with adversity:** To be able to deal with adversity successfully is very important. Ordinarily we are not assailed with overwhelming disaster as was Job. But frequently we feel like this is true, for if one part of our lives collapses, it seems that everything is falling apart; that all is lost. We need to watch ourselves and others for this danger.

**4. False fronts and false appearances:** It is often difficult to detect such discouragement and despair in others. It might be equally hard for others to detect such in us. In order to deal with such it is important to be open enough to seek guidance, counsel and advice from God and his people. Note that we want wise and godly counsellors.

See Job's discouragement in v. 7

"Remember that my life is like the wind; I shall not see happiness again".

How easy it is to believe that the sun will never rise again and the rain shall continue forever. For this we often need outside help to be brought back to reality. We need to be reminded of God's goodness and our own ability to wallow in the mud. Helpful is the guidance from 1 Cor 10:13;

"No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it."

Sometimes we need to look for God's way out. Frequently we need counsel from outside of ourselves to see it.

He also says that God will bring good out of evil.

"We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).

**5. The psalms as source of encouragement:** “This psalm shows us how one can pass from this hopeless lamentation to a profound confidence in God. The Bible, especially the Psalms, offers us a rich selection of prayers of persons in the middle of tribulation.

Psalm response: “Praise the Lord who heals the brokenhearted” (Ps 147).

Value of reading the Breviary. This gets us into all the Psalms every month.

Let us have God’s Word ready for encouragement to others in every situation of suffering!

**6. Second reading:** St. Paul is a good example of a man who, in responding to Jesus, is called to suffer a great deal. His response to this suffering is neither discouragement nor withdrawal but is courageous and generous, continuing from city to city, from affliction to affliction, in order to preach the Gospel and build the Church. How important, then, is the preaching of the Gospel and how well St. Paul does it even when he suffers a great deal (See 2 Cor 11:16 – 12:10). He has a mature spiritual perspective. Note that by continuing his preaching (and suffering) St. Paul is bringing salvation to many.

**7 Today’s Gospel** teaches us that true discipleship means getting involved in giving selfless service to others and in preaching the Good News. Jesus’ first day of public ministry at Capernaum was a Sabbath day. During the day, he had taken part in the synagogue worship, taught with authority, exorcised a demon and healed Simon’s mother-in-law. After all that, when the sun had set, he “*cured many who were sick with various diseases, and drove out many demons.*” Here we can see that Jesus is the true source of healing, both of bodily diseases and spiritual disorder. How surprised I was when at Christus Trinity Mother Frances Hospital to have many doctors tell me that they believed that 80% of illnesses were based in some spiritual cause.

**8. How important is faith to solving problems? When we encounter difficulties, adversities, or suffering, how can faith help us overcome these?** First, our faith can help us identify the origin of the suffering. It can originate from sin or some disorder within us or it can come from some evil force outside of us. What if there are really evil forces, devils and demons, who prowl around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8)? This then allows us to correctly diagnose the problem and cure it.

*For the person who is really secular, who believes in nothing supernatural, then he could not even imagine that such an enemy could exist and he would be defenseless.*

*For the person who believes in the existence of the supernatural, but is not committed to God, he would be without much of a defense, and without the supernatural help of God in that conflict.*

*Only the faithful Christian would have all the weapons for spiritual warfare and the knowledge of what is really going on.*

### **9. Practical questions:**

1. How deep is my commitment to Jesus? To what extent am I or might I be tempted to be a “fair weather” Christian or am I willing to “offer it up” to Jesus, identifying with his suffering on behalf of the world?
2. Am I in contact with people wise in the ways of God and am I in contact with the preaching and teaching of the Gospel?
3. Finally, in the end, regardless of the pain and suffering we are having, are we willing to surrender ourselves up to the greater wisdom of God?