

5th (SJ&QA) Sunday in Ordinary Time year B

Suffering and pain are realities of life. Listening to Job's story surely we can say *'misery loves company;'* how a series of awful things happened to his family. After being faithful to God Job felt betrayed by Him. We probably can identify with him: *"I shall not see happiness again."* He feels life is drudgery; even his resting times are troubled and sleepless as *'the night drags on.'* If we stop our readings with Job we would be going home depressed. But with the reading of the responsorial psalm it places us to a higher level: for God's goodness is affirmed, *'He heals the broken hearted.'* *"Don't look forward to the day you stop suffering, because when it comes you'll know you're dead."* St. Paul in our 2nd reading willingly submits himself as a slave for Jesus and for the preaching of the Gospel but he does not view his hardships as depressing as Job, for he is working from a deeper hope and a higher motive. Where Job's day is filled with depressing drudgery, Jesus made His time profitable by His good deeds to be accomplished for the benefit of others. He went healing and doing good things.

Life would be much easier if there were always someone there to help us work out life's complexities and messes. We could just dump them on that person and then wait for solutions. In today's gospel, Jesus showed how He cared for the people's needs. On leaving the synagogue, He went to the house of Simon and there He cured Simon's mother-in-law who was down with fever. (Now we know why Peter denied Jesus.)

Then that evening they brought to Him all who were sick and those possessed by demons. In fact the whole town came crowding around the door and He solved problem after problem, curing every disease and casting out demons.

If we want to describe the ministry of Jesus we can say it is *demanding and deafening*. Jesus knew the weariness and burdens of life, but He knows from where to draw his strength, *“Early in the morning He got up and went off to a deserted place and prayed.”* It is said that silence is the language of God. If we want to know what God is saying to us, then we need to enter into that silence in order to listen. Jesus is never too busy to pray. After a tiring day, He makes time for intimate conversation with God in prayer in order to rest His mind and silence His heart so that He can listen to His Father and draw strength from Him. If Jesus gave such importance to prayer, certainly we need to make prayer a priority too.

From obscurity to popularity, from oblivion to being well-known, Jesus did not bask in His glory. He was very focused on doing His Father's will. Instead of staying on in one place where He could always be the center of attention, He went on to other places to preach the Gospel. *As one mystic said, “Self-complacency hinders our spiritual growth; it leads to stagnancy. Stagnant water is filthy.”* Jesus refuses to limit His ministry to one place, *“Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.”* And Jesus

travels throughout Galilee, proclaiming the Kingdom of God and casting out demons.

Jesus came to do three major things in His ministry as examples in our lives: *First He heals*—He is concerned with the problem of suffering in all its forms by curing people from their various afflictions.

Eventually He himself will have to face tremendous suffering, but He did not use His power to prevent it. *Second, He prays* to renew and recharge spiritually after days of hectic activity. That is why we need to do what Jesus does. We need to recharge ourselves spiritually and pause momentarily to get in touch with ourselves and to listen to God's voice in our heart. *Third, Jesus preaches*. He comes proclaiming the Good News, inviting everyone to let God reign in their lives, to reconcile with God and with one another. *The Church is a beacon that guides and has the urgency to preach the values of the Gospel reminding people that Hell is still hot, sin is wrong and the cross is the way to Eternal life!*

Only a worshipping and praying Church can show concern to the needs of the sick, the suffering, the neglected and the importance to stand to the principle that Jesus preached. Anything that can improve the human condition and scientific discoveries that lessen the scourge of suffering should be strongly encouraged. Natural calamities—hurricanes, earthquakes, diseases, covid-19, accidents, loneliness, are samples of evil that are beyond our control. There are pains that are inflicted or caused by people: murder, kidnappings, slander, lies,

undeserved and unjust treatments, and a lot more. *There would be less pain and misery if we respected the rights of others, if we are less selfish, less greedy and more concerned with others' needs and feelings – in short – if we lived up to the teachings of our faith. We should remember that we do not live for ourselves but for the mission God has given us to accomplish for the good of our brothers and sisters.*

God knows every good deed and every suffering. He cares about every cry. He notices every seed planted. He enjoys every love sown. But let us not do things just for the recompense. The joy of doing good is itself the reward. God's compensation will be the profit and extra benefit. Amen!