

Homily of Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, 2024

Job 7:1-4, 6-7; Psalm 147:1-6; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Mark 1:29-39

The Jews believed that suffering was punishment for sin and for sinners. That was why Jesus' disciples asked him, "'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind.' Jesus answered, 'Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him'" (John 9:2-3).

The first reading is from the Book of Job. The book was a spiritual treatise written for the Jews to correct the wrong belief that suffering is punishment for sin and for sinners. It is a story of an upright man, Job, who went through terrible suffering, yet he remained faithful to God.

In the first reading, Job lamented, "So I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been allotted to me. ... I shall not see happiness again" (Job 7:3, 7). Many people, due to their afflictions, can identify with Job's suffering and lamentation. It is helpful, also, to identify with Job's faith.

Not only that Job was tempted by Satan, he was, also, tempted by those who should have stood by him and encouraged him. "Then his wife said to him, 'Are you still holding to your innocence? Curse God and die!' But he said to her, 'You speak as foolish women do. We accept good things from God; should we not accept evil?'" (Job 2:9-10). A great profession of faith!

Job's friends, who came to visit him, were convinced that Job's calamity was because of his iniquities. One of them accused him, "Reflect now, what innocent person perishes. Where are the upright destroyed? ..." (Job 4:7). In other words, "You are not innocent. You are not upright. That is why you are suffering." Job remained firm and said to his friends, "Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him" (Job 13:15). Again, a great profession of faith!

Job 32:1 says that Job's firmness and words silenced his friends! "Then the three men ceased to answer Job, because in his own eyes he was in the right." I believe that Job, also, silenced his wife because it is not recorded that she uttered any other word. Like Job, let us silence our adversaries and accusers with faith and firmness. However, it is important to note, "Through all this, Job did not sin in what he said" (Job 2:10).

Many people lose their faith during trials and temptations, either by seeking ungodly solutions to their sufferings or by getting angry with God and separating themselves from him. But, the story teaches us to remain faithful to God during all trials and temptations as Job did. Job received a double reward from God for his faithfulness. "The Lord even gave to Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). Job's story teaches that there is a reward for faithfulness. Like Job, let us remain firm, keep faith, and trust in God; and wait for a double reward.

Jesus did not promise heaven on earth to his disciples or to us. Rather, he says, "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (John 16:33). May God's works be made visible through our sufferings, as Jesus promises us. Amen.

In the second reading, St. Paul addresses another kind of faithfulness; and that is faithful stewardship. He uses himself as an example, "If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me and woe to me if I do not preach it! I have been entrusted with a stewardship. ... I have become all things to all ..." (1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23). Our call to stewardship may be in the church or in the society. Wherever we are called, we are invited to imitate St. Paul's conviction, disposition, and faithfulness.

In today's gospel, Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law, who had fever and cured many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. Jesus did all the miracles as the result of the people's faith in him. "Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. **They immediately told him about her.** He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them." "When it was evening, after sunset, **they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door.** He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons" (Mark 1:29-34).

Let us, therefore, "immediately" tell Jesus about our "fever," and "gather at [his] door," and bring all our illnesses and possessions to him to heal us and deliver us. Today's Psalm says, "The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, healing the brokenhearted, and binding up their wounds" (Psalm 147:2-3). May these words be fulfilled for you and for me. Amen.

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