

Homily of Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, 2021

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

There was a belief among the Jews that suffering was punishment for sin and sinners. Jesus' disciples revealed this belief when they asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). 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 sinners. It is a story of an upright man, Job, who went through terrible suffering yet he remained faithful to God. The story teaches us not to conclude that suffering is punishment for sin and sinners, but to remain faithful to God during all trials and temptations as Job did. Job received double reward from God for his faithfulness. "The Lord even gave to Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). The story, also, teaches that there is double reward for faithfulness. 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.

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 distress, can identify with Job's lamentation. It is helpful, also, to identify with Job's faith. Job 13:1 says, "In all this Job did not sin, nor did he charge God with wrong." Rather, Job made a profession of faith, "Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him" (Job 13:15). Like Job, let us keep faith, and trust in God, and wait for double reward.

St. Paul, in the second reading, addresses another kind of faithfulness; and that is faithful stewardship. He uses himself as an example, "If I preach the gospel, [there] is no reason for me to boast, ... and woe to me if I do not preach it! If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship. ... [and] when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge ..." "To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all ..." (1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23). We are all called to faithfully preach the Gospel with words and with deeds. On preaching the Gospel St. Francis of Assisi is quoted as to have said, "Preach the Gospel at all times. When it is necessary, use words."

The second reading brings to mind this piece by an unknown author:

Some people have a job in the Church and others are invited or seek out for themselves a ministry in the Church.

If you are doing it just because no one else will, it is a job. If you are doing it to serve the Lord, it is a ministry.

If you quit because someone criticizes you, it is a job. If you remain in spite of someone's remarks or opinion, it is a ministry.

If you will do it as long as it does not interfere with other activities, it is a job. If you are committed to staying, even if it means letting go of other activities, it is a ministry.

If you quit because no one thanked you or praised you, it is a job. If you stick to it, even though no one recognized your effort, it is a ministry.

It is hard to get excited about a job. It is impossible not to get excited about a ministry.

If your concern is success, it is a job. If your concern is faithfulness and service, it is a ministry.

If God calls you to a ministry, please do not treat it like a job.

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 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). Here is faith in action.

Let us, therefore, "immediately" tell Jesus about our "fever;" and "gather at [his] door" bringing all our illnesses and possessions for he is our savior and healer. May the words of today's Psalm fulfill in our lives: "The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, healing the brokenhearted, and binding up their wounds" (Psalm 147:2-3). Amen.

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