

February 04 V Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Why do bad things happen to good people?” Today’s first reading from the book of Job is a futile attempt to answer this perennial question. The Gospel shows us how Jesus spent himself in alleviating the pain and suffering around Galilee by his preaching and healing ministry rather than by pondering on universal solutions for the problem of worldwide evil.

The readings today challenge us to go courageously beyond people’s expectations by doing good as Jesus did, instead of brooding over all the pain and suffering in the world that we cannot end. They invite us to explore the importance of work in our lives and to learn a lesson about work and its motives from Job, Paul, and Jesus. While the Gospel presents Jesus enthusiastically living out his Sabbath day of missionary work, the first reading details Job’s attitude in striking contrast: in the midst of his long suffering, Job speaks of the tedium and futility of life, and he describe the miseries of human existence. Eventually, Job arrived at a place in his life where, in trust and in Faith, he finally surrendered himself, his undeserved but essential suffering, his work, and everything he had and lost to the greater wisdom of God (Job 42:1-6).

The second reading, on the other hand, reveals Paul as a true and dynamic follower of Jesus, ready to do something extra for his Lord. Paul’s conviction about the Good News and his commitment to Christ were so intense that preaching the Gospel had become a compulsion for him. Knowing that he had been called to do more than just “preach” the Gospel, he resolved to preach it without recompense. Pointing out the spontaneous response of Peter’s mother-in-law after she had been healed by Jesus – “...the fever left her and she waited on them” (Mark 1:31).

Today’s Gospel teaches us that true discipleship means getting involved in giving selfless service to others. 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.” Thus, Jesus spent himself and most of his time ministering to the needs of others, bringing healing, forgiveness, and a new beginning to many. Yet, he was well aware that even the most important work

had to be continually refueled and evaluated before God his Father. Hence, Jesus rose very early the next morning and went off "to a deserted place" to pray in order to assess his work for his Father's glory and to recharge his spiritual batteries.

We need to be instruments for the exercise of Jesus' healing power. Bringing healing and wholeness is Jesus' ministry even today. He continues it through the Church and through the Christians. In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the Church prays for spiritual and physical healing, forgiveness of sins, and comfort for those who are suffering from illness. We all need the healing of our minds, our memories, and our broken relationships. Jesus now uses counselors, doctors, friends, or even strangers in his healing ministry.

Let us look at today's Gospel and identify with the mother-in-law of Peter. Let us ask for the ordinary healing we need in our own lives. When we are healed, let us not forget to thank Jesus for his goodness, mercy, and compassion toward us by our own turning to serve others. Our own healing process is completed only when we are ready to help others in their needs and to focus on things outside ourselves.

The Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes 7:39 instructs us: "Be not slow to visit the sick; because by these things you shall be confirmed in love." Let us also be instruments for the exercise of Jesus' healing power by visiting the sick and praying for their healing. But let us remember that we need the Lord's strength, not only to make ourselves and others well, but to make ourselves and others whole.

We need to live for others as Jesus did: Jesus the son of God was a man for others, sharing who he was and what he had with others. In his life there was time for prayer, time for healing, time for rest, and time for reconciliation. Let us take up this challenge by sharing love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness with others. Instead of considering life as dull and boring let us live our lives as Jesus did, full of dynamism and zeal for the glory of God.