

February 8, 2009

## Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

### Reading 1

[Jb 7:1-4, 6-7](#)

Job spoke, saying:  
Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?  
Are not his days those of hirelings?  
He is a slave who longs for the shade,  
a hireling who waits for his wages.  
So I have been assigned months of misery,  
and troubled nights have been allotted to me.  
If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?"  
then the night drags on;  
I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.  
My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;  
they come to an end without hope.  
Remember that my life is like the wind;  
I shall not see happiness again.

### Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6](#)

R. (cf. 3a) **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

Praise the LORD, for he is good;  
sing praise to our God, for he is gracious;  
it is fitting to praise him.  
The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem;  
the dispersed of Israel he gathers.

R. **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.  
He tells the number of the stars;  
he calls each by name.

R. **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
to his wisdom there is no limit.  
The LORD sustains the lowly;  
the wicked he casts to the ground.

R. **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

### Reading II

[1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23](#)

Brothers and sisters:  
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!  
If I do so willingly, I have a recompense,  
but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship.  
What then is my recompense?  
That, when I preach,  
I offer the gospel free of charge  
so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Although I am free in regard to all,  
I have made myself a slave to all  
so as to win over as many as possible.  
To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.  
I have become all things to all, to save at least some.  
All this I do for the sake of the gospel,  
so that I too may have a share in it.

## **Gospel**

[Mk 1:29-39](#)

On leaving the synagogue  
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,  
not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left  
and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.  
Simon and those who were with him pursued him  
and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you."  
He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages  
that I may preach there also.  
For this purpose have I come."  
So he went into their synagogues,  
preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

## HOMILY

I was still reflecting on the message I was to deliver to this congregation on this weekend when a couple who took part in this Friday mass at twelve ten came up to me after mass in tears and met me in the sacristy saying: ***“Father we need that you pray for us. We are in trouble our son is in the hospital in a critical condition, in a coma, only God’s help can bring him back to life, only a miracle”*** and I enquired ***“what happened ? What is he suffering from?”*** Choked by the pain they were speechless, the mother sobering tried painfully to voice a word...: ***“he was in love with a girl, and the girl left him... he was unable to stand the separation and attempted suicide. We only rely on God’s help now, only a miracle can save him, we ask you to remember him at mass tomorrow”***...We all sighed as you did, completely dumbfounded by this tragic happening; I asked them that we pause for a moment for a prayer right away and I said a prayer with them and then told them that I’d make their concern an intention of prayer for the day and that we would remember their dear son in the morning mass. What I did on Saturday morning with the people assembled at the 8’ O’clock mass!

Sadly we hear countless tragic stories in the news these days. In the wake of this present economic crisis and the subsequent lay-offs we hear of people who, having lost their jobs lost every hope and see no other option than taking away their own lives and sometimes horribly those of the members of their families, wives and children. Situations which leave us, perplexed, wondering, troubled and even scared...what is going on?

These graphic stories bring us to the very questions that are posed in the word of Scripture that we have heard in the first reading. You all know the story of Job, how he was stripped of all his worldly possessions, his family and, touched in his own flesh by a fatal disease; he compared his life to nothing more than that of a worm...his life had become restless, painful, meaningless... and he came to question the whole purpose of life on earth and why God did even take the pain to shape the human being and gave him breath. In his hopelessness he cried out: ***“is not man’s life on earth a drudgery? Are not his days those of hirelings?”***

We may have experienced or still experience difficult circumstances in our lives or at least shared painful situations that happened in the lives of loved ones, we all make the experience of evil. God has created life for happiness but unfortunately human life is often marred by tragedy; and when we are faced with these existential situations we ask why? Unfortunate events drove people away from God. Out of revolt they rejected the idea of God itself because they could not make sense of a God who is said to be good and loving though allowing evil to strike on the lives of his creatures. Many people lost faith after war, after they had lost family, friends and everything. Indeed the presence of evil in human’s life is a scandal and we cannot overcome it thru our human reasoning. There is no definite answer to the problem of evil but we know as Scripture says that God did not create evil; God does not want his loved ones to suffer; on the contrary what he wants for us is good. It is precisely in the midst of the situations of distress that God reveals himself as a God of graciousness and compassion. God showed his compassion to the people of Israel when they were in bondage in Egypt, he revealed himself as the God who takes pity of those who suffer and are oppressed. This is the same message that we heard in

today's psalm: ***"Praise the Lord who heals the brokenhearted" He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds***". He is the Lord who remembers his people; he remembers his covenant of love for his people. Not only does not God want his people to suffer but also he shares in their sufferings as Jesus illustrated it thru his life and death giving a new meaning to human's suffering.

When we face all sorts of evil in our lives the appropriate attitude to have, is to renew our trust in God. It is the best way to overcome evil; to rely on the divine power that is more able than we can imagine or conceive. To put one's trust in him, to hope beyond all hope as St Paul says. This is not the attitude of the weak and the cowardly, this is not resignation; this is the audacity of hope; that is, to acknowledge that beyond our human reasoning and expectations our God is able. This is the attitude of faith and God does not forsake those who count on him. **He truly heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.**

Jesus' attitude toward Peter's mother-in-law in the gospel is the example that God is always caring. As soon as he heard of the woman's illness he attended to her needs, he revealed God's love to her; this is really Good News and word went around of his presence in the locality and all those who were in need came around with their concerns and he cured them and drove out demons from those who tormented by the evil spirit; he imparted his mercy on them.

God's mercy and love which bring healing and peace is made available to us thru Jesus Christ. Faith is the way in which we welcome God's gifts. And St Paul says that ***"faith comes from hearing"***, hearing the Word of God, hearing the Good News that comes from God, which means acknowledging the gospel as God's word addressed to us as individuals and as a community. It is in welcoming God's word in our lives that we can find healing and peace. Because God's word is the true spring that is able to quench human's thirst of life. So much so that St Augustine had these sublime words ***"you made us for you oh God, that our hearts are restless until we come back to you"***.

If it is in the listening of the word of God that we find God's peace and his healing presence, the question now might be *"what is the quality of my listening?"* *"Do I or do we really pay attention to the Word of God?"* *"Does the word of God we hear touch our lives? Does it elicit the necessary changes that will attune our lives to God's will and makes us ready to surrender to him in confidence? In other words do we accept that the word of God bring new meaning to our lives or do we cling to our own ways and ideas hoping to find our own way of salvation?"*

Faith is the answer to the problems that we cannot solve by our human ability and power. This faith is a gift coming from God and he is willing to grant it to us free of charge as long as we open our hearts to welcome it. Whenever we make the experience of faith, this loving encounter with the Lord which changes life, we cannot keep it for ourselves alone; we feel the duty as St Paul says to pass it onto others so that they experience the loving and soothing presence of God. It is this Good News that we should preach to other; it becomes an obligation to reach out to others so that they welcome Jesus in their lives and experience the goodness of God.

The way to do it is to take responsibility, to be a witness of Jesus Christ, that is, to extend Jesus' concern to the world, to all our brothers and sisters who are out there in need of salvation.

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