
Sunday, January 28, 2018 – Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Job 7:1-4, 6-7 | Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 | 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23 | Mark 1:29-39

GLANCING THOUGHTS

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus comes to Peter's house and he finds that Peter's mother-in-law is sick. And finding her sick, Jesus heals her. It is a familiar story about Jesus, who heals all kinds of diseases and infirmities.

But then look what happens. The whole town hears of her healing and rushes all their sick to Peter's house. The Gospel says that by the evening the whole city was gathered at the door of Peter's house (Mark 1:33)! Now, all of a sudden, Jesus seems to have become a one-man hospital. The Gospel says that Jesus healed very many of them.

If the whole city is at the door of Peter's house by the evening, then Jesus must have been healing well into the night. The Gospel says that Jesus left the house well before day and went into a secluded place to pray. He was so besieged by those who wanted healing that he couldn't pray in the house.

When his absence was finally detected, his disciples went looking for him. "Hey," they say when they find him, "Everybody is looking for you!" They seem to think that his urgent-care clinic should be open at all hours.

Now, of course, it is a good work to heal the sick. And, of course, those who love the sick are right to want them healed.

And yet how absurd it is to suppose that prayer should take second-place to work, no matter what the work is! And how sadly and understandably absurd it is to suppose that the mission of Jesus is to be a "Doctor Without Borders."

And so maybe it isn't hard to figure out what Jesus was praying about in the early morning in the countryside.

Each healing Jesus does is a good thing. But good things can actually get in the way of serving God well. To serve God well, a person has to do not just any good things that others want him to do. He has to do those good things that God has called him to do. It may take prayer to figure out which good things to turn down.

Jesus' disciples feel that Jesus needs to hurry back to Peter's village to keep practicing medicine. What Jesus tells them, after his prayer, is that he is leaving Peter's village to continue his ministry—not of medicine but of preaching in other towns. Preaching is the purpose for which he came.

What is needed to serve God well, then, is not endless good things that other people want from you. What is needed for the Lord's service is prayer first. And after that comes fidelity to just those few good things that fulfill that particular purpose to which the Lord has called you.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Sometimes, do you feel like Job in this reading? Why you think God allows suffering? Can you have faith in God, even if you don't understand why people suffer?
- What drove Paul to the point that he would do anything for the sake of the gospel? What drives you to do the things that you do?
- Do you think the Gospel text was written to tell people about Jesus the miracle worker? Are miracles a confirmation of Jesus' message of salvation? What did he say was the "purpose for which he came"?

FROM POPE FRANCIS

Humility, meekness, becoming all things to everyone and also—but this is not written in the Bible—all of us know that to do these things you have to swallow so many toads [of pride]. ... But, we must do it because peace is made like this: with humility, humiliation, searching always to see in the other the image of God. ... To humble ourselves, and make bridges, always. Always. And this is what it means to be Christian. ... It is not easy. It is not easy, but Jesus did it: he humbled himself until the end, he has shown us the way."

~Pope Francis, Daily Homily, January 24, 2014

LIVING THE READINGS

- Live Pope Francis' exhortation to 'smell like the sheep' in sharing the Gospel. Just as Paul "became weak, to win over the weak", preach the Gospel in such a way as to personally touch the lives of those around.
- In facing difficulties or a busy schedule, make sure to schedule in prayer. Consider this quote from St (Mother) Teresa of Calcutta; "If you're too busy to pray...you're too busy".