

Homily for the 5th Sunday of the Year 2021

It would be surprising if some people didn't feel a little depressed at the end of today's first reading. Job no longer enjoying prosperity and prestige, surrounded by a loving family, is now suffering physically, emotionally and spiritually to such a degree that he can see no end to it, believing that his eyes will never again see joy. We know that some form of suffering comes to most people at some time or other. Usually it is a stage which passes, but occasionally it can take such a hold of a person that they are no longer able to remember past joys, and, to hope for a better future is unthinkable. When this happens suffering becomes all consuming, the person becomes identified with it, thinking their eyes will never see joy again.

There is suffering in the gospel, but here there is a huge difference because Jesus relieves the suffering, first healing Simon's mother-in-law, who gets up and waits on them. There is a danger of missing the real meaning of this incident. The word Mark uses in respect of this healing is 'raised up', and the word used for wait on them is 'served' in the sense of diaconal service or ministry to the community, in other words, Simon's mother in law is doing much more than serving tea! Her being healed by Jesus brings her into a new relationship with Jesus and with other people.

Later that day, once the Sabbath was officially over, Jesus is then confronted by a mass of suffering in the sick, diseased and possessed people brought to him for healing. In this Jesus was putting into practice part of today's psalm, healing the broken hearted, binding up their wounds, releasing people from the demons that possess them, signalling the presence of the reign of God which he has come to proclaim, not just by what he says, but more importantly by what he does.

In the final part of the gospel Jesus recognised that he receives whatever he needs to fulfil his mission by his relationship with his Father, nourished by prayer, however we understand or experience that word/activity. This time spent alone is sacrosanct. His companions don't appreciate this at all, as far as they are concerned Jesus is on a roll, more and more people have brought their sick for him to heal. Were they enjoying a bit of reflected glory? Jesus has none of it, he knows already the danger of being misunderstood. Hard times lie ahead and Simon and the others have much to learn. Jesus will never go for the popular vote. He has come to proclaim the reign of God, and this will meet resistance from the powers of darkness which will come in different shades as we already saw last Sunday and will see again.

What are we taking from today's scripture? Can we see an end to suffering, even when this is acute, knowing that it is part of the human condition? Are we able to accept our need to take time alone, listen internally, centre ourselves, nurturing our relationship with God, if we are to show compassion to our own suffering and to that of others as we continue the Church's mission, given by Christ, to heal the broken hearted, bind up wounds, and release people from the demons that possess them?

Bidding Prayers for the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:

The Lord heals the broken hearted, binds up all their wounds, and raises the lowly. With these words of the psalm in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that it will continue Christ's healing ministry by reaching out with love and compassion to all who are suffering at this time.

Lord in your mercy

For Political leaders and those whose decisions affect the lives of so many people – that they will recognise the burdens people carry through injustice, violence, unemployment and poverty, and do what they can to alleviate their suffering.

Lord in your mercy

For all involved in whatever way in the Medical Professions – that as we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and World Day of Prayer for the sick this coming Thursday, we will show our appreciation for their dedication, skill and care by commending them all to the intercession Our Lady of Lourdes.

Lord in your mercy

For those we know who are suffering in body, mind or spirit – that they will know the presence of Christ and the love and care of family and friends.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the COVID pandemic, and Captain Sir Tom Moore who died last Tuesday, and Mary Lohan, George Mitchel, Dora Allott, Ken McKelown, Winifred Cox and Bridget Carr whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say...Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Loving God, you alone are the source of life and you abundantly bless all your creation with beauty, May we always turn to you in thanksgiving for all who were are and for all we have received. Through Christ our Lord. Amen