

February 7, 2021

Jb 7:1-4, 6-7; 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23; Mk 1:29-39

Maybe sometimes we say, along with Job *Is not ... life on earth a drudgery?* This could be a more common thought for those who have been cooped up during the pandemic, or lost employment, or had other disruptions to normal life in the last year. We all face challenges in life, and sometimes we can become very worried about them. Like Job, we can get stuck in our troubles and think we can never be happy again. Worry can get also to the point that we have a hard time focusing on other things in life that are important - the problems can pull our attention so much that we don't see the other blessings we are receiving. There will always be worries, what can get us stuck is thinking that after we get over a time of worry - we won't have another one. But we will. But this is not a cause for losing hope.

In the Gospel look at Simon's mother-in-law. She is sick, she can't even to get up, she needs help. We all can relate to this. Maybe because of loneliness or sickness, maybe because of sadness, maybe because of despair - we too may be unable to get up, feeling desperate and in need of help. Look at what Jesus does - he doesn't hesitate to go to her as soon as he is asked. His touch alone gives her strength, his touch alone takes away her pain, this touch alone gives her the strength to rise up. Not just get up, but she waits on them. This shows that she was feeling so good that she is able to what she would have done on any other day when family and guests would come to her home - she shows her love by taking care of them - reminds me of my own grandmother. The result of the touch of Jesus is powerful: it brings Healing, strength, and courage. But we have to open ourselves to receive this, we have to be flexible to receive it in the way he is working in the world.

Jesus can transform our weaknesses and let them become strengths, he can take our impossible dilemmas and mysteriously work them out. I know that for me, recognizing my faults and weaknesses, and the obstacles in front of me, can be a let down. We all don't want to have these things and wish that they would disappear. So we can either ignore them, or we can approach them with knowledge of their reality and have faith in Jesus' power. The knowledge of the weaknesses we have, and the experience of the trials we go through, only make us stronger if we can learn to surrender these to Jesus and to trust in his ability to transform them. This may not happen immediately - we may still be upset or sad or stressed for a time as things work

themselves out - but to those who trust in the power of Jesus, amazing things can happen. I recently had this happen as a situation that I had been worrying about for a week made an unexpected positive turn, and for reasons I cannot explain, I became more at peace. The key was that I came to a point of true surrender and faith in prayer. We can be consoled in tough times, we can have a strength come to us that we can't explain, we can become stronger to face this trial and others that will inevitably come - only when we learn to peacefully place the weakness and situation in the hands of the Lord, and patiently accept the path to resolution that he has selected. Strength comes as we let go, strength comes as we allow Jesus to touch and lead us.

But we don't just become stronger for ourselves, but also to be able to assist others who go through similar things. St. Paul says today: *To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some.* When we are aware of our weaknesses, when we are laid low with troubles, we must turn to the Lord. We do this not just because we want things to be better for ourselves, but so that we can become better instruments in the Lord's hands to help others. This selflessness, and recognition of how Jesus uses all of us to do his work, is important. Sometimes we are the recipient of help from Jesus sent through the actions of another, and other times we are the one who transmits Jesus' touch to someone. The important thing is to not lose hope, to not be so tired of waiting for Jesus, to never give up.

Jesus gives example of this perseverance in the Gospel. People come to him in the darkness, the darkness of the day, and the darkness of their sadness and worry. Despite being tired, he heals all that are brought to him. He is not focused on himself but on others. Simon's mother-in-law also does not focus on herself, but willingly serves others. One of the things that we can let slip when we are upset and weak is our prayer life - but we can't do that - or we close ourselves off to the power of that touch. Notice that Jesus does not forget to pray, he does not forget to give time in his busy schedule for connecting with his Father. So let us continue to connect with the Lord here in this Mass, let us approach the healing presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. As we accept the healing that he gives, as we accept the things he does not heal, as we wait for his time to receive a mysterious strength, we can give thanks. Rather than the difficulties of life being a drudgery, they can be an opportunity - an opportunity to reach for the hand of Jesus and to let him strengthen us so that we may, in turn, strengthen others. An opportunity to focus on the things in life that are really most important, and also ... a chance to find the path to peace that he has laid out for us.