

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time B 2021

Christ is a person for others. This is the message of our Gospel today. We heard in the Gospel that Jesus was greeted by people with all sorts of health issues and needs. They were all crying for help. And Jesus attended to all of them. He eased their pains and sorrows. He comforted them, healed them, and raised them up.

Jesus performed these miracles not to impress people but to help people. He always uses his healing powers to benefit those in need. This is the reason why He told his disciples that it was time for them to move on to the nearby villages when the people were looking for him the next day. He reminded His disciples that his mission is not to increase his popularity, but to preach the Gospel to all of Israel. This is a lesson that Jesus would teach us over and over again by His words and action in the Gospel: He is not a political figure looking to climb the ladder of success as his disciples would like Him to be; but He is a servant and a messenger, a man for others. And in a world that tends to idolize “success” and “achievement” with human titles, awards and promotions; the selfless, transcendent purpose of a person entirely focused on fulfilling God’s plan by helping others most especially those in need is like a bright star shining in the darkness. When we see this kind of light in our midst, we are reminded that there is still so much hope in the world that we live in today.

However, in times of difficulties, there is so much we can take as a person. There is a tendency for us to become tired, frustrated or even discouraged with God and one another during these moments. This is what happened to Job in our First Reading. Just as his story shows us: he suffered tremendously and was on the verge of hopelessness and despair when God came to His rescue. He cried, he complained, but never lost hope. God listened to his prayer. God has always been with Him all along. He suffered with Him. He cried with Him and in the end, He healed and blessed him. And so, in our own experience of challenges and suffering right now, we are continuously being reminded that we are not on our own, that we are never abandoned. God is always there to rescue us in the most intimate and personal way.

We witness this when He healed Simon Peter’s mother-in-law in the Gospel today. She was sick with fever. In the ancient world, fevers posed greater threats than they do today. If the fever was the result of an infection (which fevers frequently are), it could indicate an impending death, since they had no antibiotics. This explains the Apostles’ concern. Jesus could have snapped his fingers and cured her from the other side of the house, but he didn’t. Instead, he followed Simon

Peter over to the bed where his mother-in-law lay, listening as they tell him the history of her sickness. Then he bended down beside her, grasped her sweaty, feverish hand in his own firm, gentle grip, and looked kindly at her. It was with that personal touch that he relieved her sickness, and then, as St. Mark pointed out, He even helped her up! In Jesus Christ, God comes to meet us in the reality of our humanity, bringing the warmth of his divine light and healing into the most mundane nooks and crannies of our lives.

This truth of our faith has a direct impact on our personal relationship with Him. It means that Christ is “for” each one of us. It means that he is always thinking of us, always guiding us, always walking with us, always at our side. As beautiful as this truth is, it can also be hard for us to accept. Our modern society is built on individualism, the idea that each person is self-sufficient, able to achieve happiness and fulfillment through their own efforts. Because of this, depending on others, is often seen as a sign of weakness. This individualistic attitude is embedded in our TV shows, movies, music, advertisements - we are surrounded by it. And as a result, it seeps into our relationship with Christ too. We sometimes think that we should be able to make ourselves perfect and holy, and then we will present ourselves to Christ to earn a reward. But if that were the case, Jesus would never have come to earth in the first place. He would not have given us the Church and the sacraments. He would not have died on a cross to show us the limitlessness of his love. Christ is a person for others because he knows that all of us need a Savior. It is not a sign of weakness or failure - it is the surest sign of wisdom to be loved and cared by our God.

So today, let us embrace Christ as our personal Savior and Lord so that He can continue to heal us and lift us up especially at this time. Let us also follow His example as a person for others so that we too can become an instrument of peace and healing in the world that we live in today.

Amen.