



Fifth Sunday of the Year

**Human Suffering - Job's cry and Jesus' cry from the cross:
"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me!"**

Fr. Laurence Kriegshauser, O.S.B.

We read from the Book of Job only twice in the three-year cycle of Ordinary Time, and even today we had only a small taste of Job's complaining. Even from that short passage a verse is omitted as too offensive for our squeamishness. Job simply says what is true: Vermin cover my flesh, and loathsome scabs; my skin is cracked and breaks out afresh. The Bible is not squeamish but fronts and expresses reality head on. It lays all our humanness before the Lord to be consecrated by him. Job's expression of misery is an important part of God's word just as the cross is. The human race brought sin into the world and continues to suffer the consequences in pain, betrayal, war, jealousy, murder, and ultimately death. It cries out for redemption and healing. Unless we acknowledge the real horror of our situation, we will never appreciate what God has done for us, never reach out to his loving message of deliverance.

So let us linger a while with the book of Job. Let us taste our own unfulfilled longing, our failures, our sins, and let us feel the suffering of millions who hunger, who suffer from aids or natural disasters, grinding poverty or loneliness, confinement in camps or ethnic hatred. The human race cries out to God for liberation, so the "Job" moment is a key moment in man's redemption. It is Christ suffering on the cross.

But the liturgy evokes this suffering only to proclaim that God by entering it has overcome it. "Praise the Lord who heals the broken hearted," who healed the ailing human race by suffering our death and then raising his body to eternal life. The purpose of the cures narrated in the Gospel – today the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and the cures and exorcisms that followed – is to show dramatically that in Christ the forces that were destroying mankind have been overcome. The real healing was the condemnation of sin on the cross and the gift of forgiveness of sins through the coming of the Holy Spirit. We who have accepted the Good News of Christ are new creatures, reformed in the likeness of the Christ now risen from the dead. We share in Christ's life and his victory over sin.

In the Eucharist we taste that death and rising, just as in Baptism "we entered the tomb with Christ so that as Christ was raised from the dead we too might live a new life." Our bodies may be still subject to decay, but our spirit is already united with Christ who is preparing us for his eternal kingdom. Each time we nourish ourselves on this spiritual food, the Lord takes firmer hold of us and gives us new strength against evil. When we offer the sacrifice of the Son to the Father we at



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the same time bring down many blessings from the Father for suffering men, women, and children all over the world. This sacrifice is of infinite power. As the Church teaches, no other action can match the efficacy of it. That's why it is terribly important for us to be here, standing around the sacrifice of Christ as he offers himself to the Father and offering it with him for the salvation of the world.

As we become more filled with the Spirit of Christ we become evangelists of his Good News. Like Jesus we go to the other towns of Galilee to bring his liberating message. Like Paul we try to be all things to all men in the hope of winning some of them.

Do you see the trajectory? We allow the Lord to transform our own misery into newness of life and proclaim it to others. Only in experiencing Jesus as our personal liberator are we empowered to bring him convincingly to others.