

Homily 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2024

It is a well-documented psychological theory that 'misery loves its own company'. If you have the misfortune therefore to belong to a group which always sees the negative side of life with 'the glass half empty' then it's more than likely that you too will fall into that mindset and see everything as a problem or a failure.

Job in today's First Reading falls exactly into that trap. Overcome with grief and his losses Job laments his life as a drudgery, work a means to an end and only sees death and darkness when his life comes to an end. He is surrounded by friends who are also pessimists, and they only confirm him in his misery. Job's trust in God however delivers him from this pit of despair and eventually he sees meaning in his suffering and pain. In the end, God restores all that Job has lost and gives him twice as much as he had before. The Lord blesses him with a long life, with seven more sons and three more daughters who were 'the most beautiful women in all the land!'

St Paul in The Second Reading to The Corinthians (1 Corinthians) reminds us that we, as disciples, are charged with proclaiming The joyful Good News of The Gospel, particularly in the midst of suffering and pain, persecution and torture. We must not compromise this message of Jesus, a message of hope, love and victory of life over death and love over evil. Even if it makes us unpopular we are called to remind our communities that Jesus' mission is 'to go out' to the 'poor, sick, sinners, marginalised, prisoners, downtrodden' and proclaim this 'news of great joy!'

St Mark reminds us that this 'going out' is only possible if, like Jesus, our actions are rooted in prayer. Jesus, exhausted by his ministry to the most vulnerable needed frequently to connect with His Heavenly Father in silent prayer. We too, if we are to minister to the neediest in a Christ-like manner must find our own 'lonely place' far from the 'madding crowd' where we can be alone with the Father, in union with The Son and open to the stirrings of The Holy Spirit.

So, like Job and St Paul, let us not be disheartened by the news of suffering and pain with which we are constantly bombarded but retire frequently to our sacred space to be recharged by The Gospel of Joy, knowing that God will in the end be victorious. In the words of St Julian of Norwich, the great female medieval mystic of The Church, let us trust in God's plan, 'All will be well all manner of things will be well.' After all are we not 'The Easter People' called to joy and optimism in Christ Jesus?