5th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Written by an unknown author sometime between 600 and 300 B.C., this dramatic poem treats of the problem of the suffering of the innocent. This was an important question for the Israelites who believed that suffering was always a punishment for sin. Job had not sinned, yet he suffered greatly. The book of Job is long, 42 chapters, and this excerpt comes relatively early in the account. The book introduces Job as "blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil," with "seven sons and three daughters," yet calamity after calamity befalls him. In just two verses, we hear that a great wind blows through the house where his children were having a party, and the house collapses, killing them all. We are told that when he first hears of the deaths of his children that he "fell upon the ground and worshipped." That scene of Job worshipping in the midst of his mourning leaves us breathless. Indeed, he must have been the most righteous man on earth.

Job spoke saying:
1. Is not man's life on earth a drudgery? This drudgery was forced military service. Are not his days those of hirelings?
2. He is a slave who longs for the shade, a hireling who waits for his wages. Job compares human life in general to forced military service, to the work of a day laborer, and to simple slavery—three proverbially wretched states of life. These first two verses apply to all mankind but the rest of the selection is personal.
3. So I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been allotted to me. Each man has a life span and work allotted to him; Job sees his life span and work as full of misery.
4. If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?" then the night drags on; I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.
6. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope. The weaver's shuttle is a monotonous movement and just as when the shuttle runs out of thread, Job sees his life coming to an end.
7. Remember that my life is like the wind, The wind moves aimlessly and then passes, to be seen no more. I shall not see happiness again. Once again Job addresses God. Job is left utterly distraught by his suffering but he doesn't despair and is finally vindicated! (Read chapter 42 verses 7-17.) Suffering was entirely mysterious before Christ came and bestowed upon it a saving aspect. The whole problem would be different if Job knew anything of a judgment and possible happiness after death, but he has no evidence or basis for such a belief.

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Today we hear Paul address the question about eating meat which has been offered as a sacrifice to idols. A considerable amount of the meat that was sold in the market came from animals sacrificed to idols. Usually, only certain portions of the sacrificial victims were burned, the remainder becoming the property of the temple priests. Much of this meat was sold to butchers and was available at a lesser cost. Additionally, social life involving friends and family who were still pagans exposed them to common meals at family festivals, including some in the temple of a pagan deity. Paul first explains the general principles that apply: They may eat meat of this type, for idols have no real existence, but sometimes charity requires that they abstain from it; if it was thought that it would lead a new convert back to paganism for example by

corrupting the conscience. Paul then illustrates what he says by telling what he himself does. It is from this illustration that our reading comes.

Brothers and sisters:
16. If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! Paul's ministry is not volunteer work but a mission he received directly from Christ (Acts 9:15-16). The responsibility on his shoulders is so great that a frightening prospect of judgment awaits him if he abandons his assignment. The Church has often used these words of St. Paul to remind the faithful that our Lord has called them to the apostolate through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The Second Vatican Council explains what this apostolate involves: "The witness of life is not the sole element in the apostolate for the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers to draw them towards the faith, or to the faithful to instruct them, strengthen them, and incite them to a more fervent life.
17. If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship. "Recompense" means reward or payment. "Stewardship" means a commission that he is obliged to fulfill.
18. What then is my recompense? That, when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. Paul's motive and energy stem from something very different from mere human generosity: it stems from his faith in divine generosity and the sheer goodness of God! The historical situation here is that Paul refused the stipend he could have rightfully accepted from the Corinthians because he wanted to make the parallel point that the good news is freely given by God. This wise decision placed Paul at an advantage over his opponents as it lent him, and his message, credibility. A stipend is money or goods to live on which is a person's right when their life is dedicated to preaching the gospel. The Catechism says that the minister should ask nothing for the administration of the sacraments beyond the offerings defined by the competent authority, always being careful that the needy are not deprived of the help of the sacraments because of their poverty. However, the Christian people ought to contribute to the support of Church's ministers, for the laborer deserves his food.
19. Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. Here Paul is explaining his method of ministry for he was a master at accommodating himself to others. He listened carefully and tried to find a point of contact with the other person. In a sense, he met people where they were.
22. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. This is a reference to the previous chapter in which Paul addressed a controversy about meat offered to idols. Though it is legitimate for Christians to eat such meat because they recognize that idols do not even exist, Paul says he would not eat it if doing so would scandalize "the weak," those who did not understand and regarded the eating of such meat as worship of idols. Paul willingly became "weak" himself and limited his freedom for their sake. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. Paul adapts himself to the needs and sensitivities of others. Without diluting the gospel message, he willingly sacrifices certain apostolic privileges that might hamper the effectiveness of his ministry to the world.
23. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it. Paul preaches the good news of salvation in hopes that he will be able to participate in it for all eternity.

Mark 1:29-39

Jesus is early in his public ministry. He has begun to gather his disciples around him and he has gone to Capernaum and has taught in the synagogue where he astonished all present with his teaching. He also heals a man who is possessed by an evil spirit. In doing this he gives the residents of Capernaum a very clear sign that God's salvation has come: By overcoming the evil one, Jesus shows that he is the Messiah, the Savior, one more powerful than demons. Our reading for today immediately follows this event.

29. On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. In Capernaum, where this story takes place, the synagogue was about a parking lot away from the home of Simon Peter, which became the headquarters for Jesus. Whenever he was there, the evangelists spoke of his being "at home." Andrew was apparently not married and lived with Peter and Perpetua and her mother. (Just a note of reflection on these two remarkably hospitable women whose home became a hotel, an auditorium, and a hospital, visited by people with all sorts of diseases and demons!)
30. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her.
31. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them. When the fever left her she waited on them, which shows that the healing was complete. It also gives the example for those who are healed to then serve others. The word for "helped her up" is also used in James 5:14-15 describing the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick: "Call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord WILL RAISE HIM UP; and if he has committed sins he will be forgiven."
32. When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The people had waited until it was evening, after sunset on the Sabbath, to bring the sick and demon-possessed to Jesus, because it was laborious and thus unlawful before the Sabbath day ended.
33. The whole town was gathered at the door.
34. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him. The evil spirits are not permitted to acknowledge Jesus as the Holy One of God. The danger would be that Jesus would be recognized merely as a miracle worker or conquering Messiah. Mark keeps the true purpose of Jesus a secret until the disciples are capable of understanding for the scandal of the cross would be too much for them to bear at this point.
35. Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Jesus prayed early on this Sunday morning following the Sabbath. His practice anticipates the liturgical prayer of the Church on the FIRST DAY of the week. The Catechism also points out that the words and works that Jesus does are the visible sign of his prayer done in secret.
36. Simon and those who were with him pursued him Notice that whenever the disciples are enumerated, Simon (Peter) is always listed first—an indication of his primacy.
37. and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you."
38. He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." Jesus did not stay around to bask in the acclaim of the crowds but chose instead to go to others to proclaim the Father's kingdom and to do cosmic battle with the evil one.
39. So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee. The first authority that Jesus gave his apostles was the power to expel

demons (Mt. 10:1). Consider that 1/3 of the angels followed Satan in rebellion against God. (Rev.) To deny Satan is to deny sin. All the demons were created good by God. They became evil through their own fault. Pope John Paul II was very clear on the subject of Satan: "The battle against the devil, which is the principal task of St. Michael the Archangel, is still being fought today, because the devil is still alive and active in the world. The evil that surrounds us today, the disorders that plague our society, man's inconsistency and brokenness are not only the results of Original Sin, but also the result of Satan's pervasive and dark action."

This powerful prayer of exorcism was composed by Pope Leo XIII and should be said every day:
"St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protector against the wickedness and snares of the Devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell, Satan and all the other evil spirits who prowl through the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen."

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2006" by Martin Connell, (2) The Commentary Notes of Tim Gray, (3) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (4) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1997" by Lawrence E. Mick, (5) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers:2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (6) "The Catechism Of The Catholic Church", (7) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (8) "The Navarre Bible: Corinthians," (9) "The Letters To The Corinthians" by William Barclay, (10) "The Twelve: The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary" by C. Bernard Ruffin, (11) "An Exorcist Tells His Story," by Father Gabriele Amorth, (12) "A Pilgrim In The Holy Land" by Fr. Godfrey O.F.M., (13) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (14) "Mark: Good News for Hard Times" by George T. Montague, S.M., (15) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online Founded by Dr. Scott Hahn, and (16) "Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers: 1991" by Graziano Marcheschi with Nancy Seitz Marcheschi.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.