

Commentary on the Readings for February 4, 2024

The Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

To better understand the readings for today, we need to begin with the Gospel, as we have done in the past, because it is the Gospel that sums up the theme of ***Our Need for Prayer and Healing***.

The **Gospel** is from the ***Gospel of Mark (1:29-39)***. We should not be misled by Mark's brief passage describing Jesus' almost daily routine. If we go back a few verses, we find Jesus curing the demoniac and preaching "with authority." Then He tells the recipient of the miracle not to tell anyone, just as He tells the demons to be "quiet." This is done because Jesus is the earthly embodiment of all divine power. He does not need fame or attention. He wants us to call upon Him in faith and trust to fill our needs. He already knows them, but is waiting for us to ask in faith. When Jesus heals, He heals the whole person. This is one of the greatest reasons for our asking for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, **to be healed from within**.

The **First Reading** is from the ***Book of Job (7:1-7)***. Here, Job is in the early stages of his 'test of faith.' He has not come to the realization that this is just a test and that God is standing by to help him. He is so discouraged that he can see no end to his misery and lacks the hope for change. We all reach this point sometime in our life, but that is when we should call upon our faith and pray to the God of all divine power to help us, to pull us up from the drudgery of this life and set us upon the road that will lead to spiritual happiness. In the end Job does reach this level, but he must suffer greatly before getting there.

The **Responsorial Psalm (147:1-6)** is a song that praises God for His goodness and mercy. It could be one that Job sang in the final chapter for his life when all good things were restored.

The **Second Reading** is from the ***First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (9:16-23)***. In this passage, we see St. Paul as the opposite of Job. He has been heavily burdened with the task of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ yet he does so willingly, knowing that it will lead to his salvation and to the honor and glory of God. Christ and prayer were the sources of his strength. These readings speak to all of us, but primarily to those who are experiencing the stress of the current economic or employment situations. They encourage us to turn to Jesus Christ, the divine healer, for strength, comfort and healing, not as we might desire, but rather as He wants for us. Turn to Him in prayer and humility, giving your troubles, depression or aches and pains in faith and trust; and then watch for the results. So, the question is: Have you ever given yourself to Jesus Christ in faith? Try it! You will be amazed at the results. Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

MFB