

Archbishop Lori's Homily - 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Knights of Columbus Board Meeting

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Knights of Columbus Board Meeting

Naples, Florida

Feb. 4, 2018

Sometimes a Scripture passage strikes an immediate chord in us. Such is the case with today's reading from the Book of Job. Beset by all kinds of misfortunes, even tragedies, Job complains that life is drudgery. Instead of a gift, existence is perceived as a burden offering no rest, no peace, no joy. There are days, are there not, when we can relate to this.

When I was in the seminary, I had a roommate who was an early riser. His super-loud alarm would go off every morning at 5:15 a.m. Every morning he'd shut it off and say the same thing: "Gladly, Jesus, gladly!" My comments went in a different direction... At that hour, to say the least, it was hard to summon my enthusiasm and optimism.

Sometimes the daily grind gets us down. Our troubles and woes have a way of spoiling the whole of our lives, even those things we might normally enjoy. Upon waking our minds and hearts readily "reload" the previous day's burdens or perhaps those heavy burdens we've carried for years. All such things make it difficult for us to look ahead to the new day with hope and to see it as a fresh opportunity to consecrate ourselves to the Lord.

So common is this experience that Job stands as a symbol for a humanity that is afflicted, discouraged, stumbling around without much hope, a humanity that has all but ceased to hope for something better.

In the Gospel we read how Jesus, accompanied by James and John, entered the

house of Peter and Andrew where he cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. Word must have gotten around that Jesus was there because by nightfall the whole town was gathered at the door.

Those people too were beset by many woes. They were suffering from various diseases and possessed by demons, realities with which, sadly, we are all too familiar. Could it not be said that Job stands a symbol for those people and for people everywhere who find life burdensome? Could it not be said that in the many people who were looking for Jesus Job showed up at the house of the apostles, that is to say, the Church?

Many people, including ourselves, show up at the doorstep of the Church. As we arrive, we hope to be welcomed; we hope that the liturgy will be celebrated with dignity and joy. But deep down, don't we come to the Church's doorstep looking for Jesus? Like the people in the Gospel, we want to bring to Jesus everything in our lives that needs to be healed – our sins, our broken relationships, our anxieties, our illnesses. We come to the Church because the Church is the privileged place where Christ meets Job.

Jesus continually responds to Job with love. To the poor and brokenhearted, he brings the glad tidings of salvation. To those held captive by their sins, he offers the freedom of forgiveness. To those unable to see the direction their lives ought to take, he restores sight. To all who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, he instills hope. As Jesus moves among us, in and through the Church, our lives can be transformed. For, not only does the Lord address the wounds of our existence, but he also gives our lives, “a new horizon [of hope] and a decisive direction” – as Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his encyclical, *God Is Love*.

Thus, when we confess our sins with a contrite heart, Jesus heals us inwardly. When we ask the Lord to strengthen us in virtue, the Lord comes to live not only with us but in us. Should we ask the Lord to guide us in decisions both big and small, he implants the truth of his Word in our minds and hearts through the Holy Spirit. And when our eyes of faith perceive the look of love on the face of Jesus, our lives are no longer meaningless drudgery but rather a joyful if arduous journey toward the new and eternal Jerusalem.

As we know, the house of the apostles, that is to say, the Church, is universal. It exists wherever Jesus is. It exists where Peter is. It existed in the deserted place where Jesus withdrew to pray. And it existed in those other towns and villages where Jesus, accompanied by the apostles, went to preach the Gospel. Today the Church exists in every part of the world, from the most remote village to the most populous city. Jesus is still on mission to all these places. The peripheries to which Jesus journeys, however, are not only spatial. He also seeks to reach the minds, hearts, and lives that are very far from him and thus far removed from the Kingdom of God.

Having touched our lives with the joy of the Gospel, Jesus invites us, as he invited the apostles, to join him in his missionary journeys. As followers of Jesus, as members of the Church, as members of our beloved Order, we are called to work side-by-side with the Church's pastors – in seeking to spread the Gospel, to win back those who have lapsed, and to win over the indifferent and the hard of heart. And as we engage in the ministry of evangelization, St. Paul offers us a lot of wisdom in today's reading from 1st Corinthians. He suggests, in fact, two important qualities for anyone who takes seriously the baptismal calling we've received to do the work of an evangelist: First is generosity, for evangelization is never about ourselves or about our needs, or about a desire for material gains or social prominence. It's something we ought to do freely, lovingly, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. And second, evangelizing requires a lot of humility because it's not about imposing ourselves and our views on other people. Rather, like St. Paul, we try to identify with others so as to reach them where they are, remembering always that Jesus found us and loved us 'while we were yet sinners.' Thus we strive to become all things to all people so as to save at least some of them!

So, what a journey we've just made: from Job to Jesus and with Jesus to the Church's mission of evangelization. As we open our hearts to the Lord and become his missionary disciples, we will not be free of suffering but we will be filled with joy as each day dawns and as we dedicate that day to the Lord and his mission. May the family of the Knights of Columbus always be at the forefront of that mission!

Vivat Jesus!