

My dear people of God, today's first readings is taken from the Book of Job. Theology of the Book of Job seeks to **explain why innocent people suffer**. Most Israelites believed that if they obeyed God's commandments, God would bless them and protect them. They also believed that **suffering or poverty is a punishment from God**. The Book of Job challenges this way of thinking by opining that Job was a blameless and upright man, yet evil befalls on him (Job1:1). In fact, Job's final defense in Chapter 31 is one of the finest summaries of the Old Testament vision of a righteous person. In sum, God is beyond human knowledge and that some mysteries, including suffering, can never be completely understood; they can only be accepted. The reading sounds like someone who is terribly depressed and can find no meaning whatever in life. "Is not man's life on earth nothing more than pressed service, his time no better than hired drudgery?"(Job7:1). How often have we heard people speak like this? Perhaps we have felt like that ourselves sometimes, fed up with life, bored with our work...

The Gospel has given us a very different picture altogether. It is a description of part of a typical day in the life of Jesus. The day had begun by Jesus going into the synagogue of Capernaum because it was a Sabbath day. There he made a tremendous impression by his teaching that had a unique air of authority, which was missing from most teachers of the Law. While still in the synagogue, a possessed man burst in and made a great scene. Jesus overpowered the evil spirit and cured the man. Then Jesus left the synagogue and, because it was still the Sabbath, when work and travel were forbidden, Jesus and his disciples went to Simon Peter's house, where Peter's mother-in-law was confined to bed with a fever. Jesus immediately healed her and lifted her to her feet (Mk.1:29-31). What did the good lady do? Did she slump into a chair and wait for sympathy to be poured out on her? No, she immediately began to serve the needs of those in the house with her. She chose to serve, not because that was the duty of a woman but because it is the duty of every Christian to serve. The restoration of her health meant that she could once more take care, according to her gifts, of the community. The life of Jesus is **telling us that life is for service, for giving, for sharing**. Besides, Jesus is telling us that God **will be better known through love in action than through any statement of doctrine**.

At the end of the day, what does Jesus do? Put his feet up, slump in front of the TV with a beer in his hand? Or relaxes on his arm chair, No, he goes off to a lonely place to pray. Jesus is teaching us both **public and private life**. He had given away so much of himself that day that he now needed to be by himself, to recharge his batteries and, above all, to get in touch with his Father, the source of all his energy, and to restore wholeness and peace. He will come away from this experience truly energized and ready to share and serve. There is a need of all of us for rest but rest that refreshes and rebuilds. We rest in order to come back to a life of service, not in order to get away from it. We must learn to get up in the morning, and leave our house to go off to a lonely place and pray there. The Gospel passage reminds us that we will not take bold decisions, unless we are inwardly free, as Jesus was. It also teaches us the secret of his inner freedom – his regular, deep, personal prayer, the fact that he would "leave the house and go off to a lonely place to pray there" (Mk.1:35).

Finally, beloved in Christ, today's Gospel teaches us to avoid cheap popularity in our vocation as followers of Christ. Although, Jesus' **healing and deliverance** brought many people to him, Jesus never relied on popularity. We must accept people's admiration, but that should not blind our vision or lose focus of our vocation. As the people in Capernaum wanted Jesus to focus only on them- 'Everybody is looking for you'. Jesus' response was I must move to the neighborhood as well. Sometimes, we find it difficult to accept transfers or new postings because we don't want to move from our comfort zones. Like Jesus, we must move to a new place where our service maybe needed most. Let us always seek the will of God than our own desires. Even in the difficult moment like Job, the will of God must prevail, because God is bigger than our problems. Let us fixed our eyes on God, and he will change our bad situation into good, as he did for Job and Peter's mother- in -law. Amen!