

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year B

## Fifth Ordinary Sunday

### **First reading:**

(Job 7.1-4, 6-7)

*Job's Suffering*

In the whole three-year cycle there are only two Sunday readings from the lovely and tragic Book of Job. The Book puts at its most acute the problem of sickness and suffering: why should I suffer?

Job has lost everything: wealth, family, health. He sits on a rubbish heap, scratching his sores with a broken pot. In this passage, he gives a painful picture of the sick person's frustration, the slow and pointless passage of time, the crazy, distorted imaginings. He feels that God is oppressing him, but yet clings to God as his one hope of release.

Facing sickness and death is worrying for anyone who believes in a loving God. On the natural plane, sickness is a reminder that things are out of order and could get worse. To the believer, it is a reminder that this brilliant, complicated, sophisticated creation cannot continue developing for ever, but must return to God in God's own good time.

As Jeremiah explains, the pot cannot complain to the potter: 'Why did you make me like this?' But couldn't a loving God have made something so that it never went wrong? Or is it the consequence of our revolts against God that confidence in God has given way to fear and mistrust?

### **Question:**

How is the love of God compatible with unmerited suffering?

### **Second reading:**

(1 Corinthians 9.16-19, 22-23)

*Paul, the Servant of All*

As we work through this letter to the Christians of Corinth, we find Paul's reflection on his own task.

His teaching is firm enough. Under the compulsion of his divine call, he has no choice but to teach the truth. Yet in his desire to win them for Christ, he is sensitive to the needs of all people.

Here he has just been giving a ruling on whether it is allowed to eat food that has been dedicated to pagan gods. His first point is this: as such gods don't exist, dedication to them does not affect the food. But his most important point is that you must not upset other people's consciences. In other words, the overriding principle is to be sensitive and caring towards the needs of individuals.

If we are anxious to do the right thing, we can often be quite hard about acting 'on principle', trampling on the feelings of others without regard for their own sincerely held beliefs. For Paul, the highest principle in his treatment of people is always love.

### **Question:**

How valuable is celibacy as a witness in the Church?

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year B

## Gospel:

(Mark 1.29-39)

### *Jesus at Capernaum*

The snippets gathered in the gospel reading give us a sample of Jesus' activity at Capernaum, the little fishing village on the edge of the Lake of Galilee: healing and prayer.

The first incident, the healing of the relative of his friend and follower Simon Peter, reminds us that Jesus does respond if we pray for the needs of our nearest and dearest. Then the summary of his evening activity shows his concern to bring healing and wholeness.

Just so any Christian will desire to follow his example: we can harm or heal those around us in so many ways. It does not need to be a miracle! A greeting, a look, a smile, a touch can bring the peace of Christ to someone in desperate need of reassurance - and no less can they harm and wound.

But the third little story, of Jesus going off to pray in the early morning, shows that the wellspring of all his activity was his union with the God whom he called his Father. We cannot say what Jesus' prayer was, any more than we can say what anyone's prayer is, but the confident communication between Father and Son must have been the source of his strength and compassion.

## Question:

What is the best time and circumstance for prayer?

---