

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time B2021

The readings of this Sunday talk about the difficulties of life. They show that the difficulties of life can appear at the moment people least expect. They invite us to the awareness that in the middle of all those difficulties, God is always with us and ready to rescue us.

The first reading recalls the story of Job. It gives an account of the response of God to his complaint as he was overwhelmed with an incomprehensible suffering. It shows, in particular, how God evokes the work of creation in order to invite Job to silence and the recognition of his ignorance about the mystery of life.

What is behind this text is the idea that life is difficult; it is crossed by pains and suffering. There is also the idea that a mystery surrounds us and our life. The last idea is related to the truth that whatever might be our suffering, God does not abandon us. He is always with us.

This text allows us to understand today's Gospel as Jesus calms the stormy wind on the lake of Galilee. The Gospel starts by mentioning Jesus' crossing of the lake with his disciples in a boat. Then, it reports on the incident of the violent storm that happened as the tossed boat was about to sink. After that, it reports on the panic of the disciples who, fearing for their life, awoke Jesus who was sleeping in the stern. The Gospel ends with the reaction of Jesus who calmed the wind and the astonishment of the disciples at the view of what happened.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about the storms of life and the continual presence of Jesus. In fact, we all have some painful experiences of life. We all know that life is a long journey made up of ups and downs. We know that life is beautiful and enjoyable, but we also know that at times it can be unpleasant and difficult to bear.

We know by experience that difficulties, hardships, misfortunes and conflicts can cross our life anytime as though the boat of our life was tossed by waves and wind. At times like that, people feel really overwhelmed to the point that they have a terrible impression that God is not only asleep, but is far away from them, silent and even absent.

When things go well, everything else is quiet and life itself is more than a pleasure. But, when the problems occur the whole picture of life changes. In such circumstances, people start asking questions: why? Why me? Why is it so? Why does not God intervene and put an end to my misery? Why does he not alleviate my suffering?

Those questions are certainly legitimate, as they come from a broken heart that tries to find a meaning to what is happening to him. However, though legitimate, those questions remain most of the time without answer. By the end of the day, the one who suffers has more questions than answers.

The fact that there is no direct answer to those burning questions shows that when we deal with suffering, we are not dealing with a problem, but with a mystery. A problem is something outside of me, something I can put before me, study, analyze and for which I can find a solution. A mystery, on the contrary, is something which is beyond me, hidden to my understanding, whose explanation I do not know and which I cannot comprehend in the same way I do with a problem.

Our faith teaches us that God cannot prevent the suffering to happen to us, but he promises us his assistance so that we might not be crushed down by it. Suffering is part of what it means to be human. It is written in our biology, because whatever might be our luck to be in good health or the length of our life, one day we have to face the reality of dying, which is preceded by suffering.

But, whatever might be the type of suffering we are confronted with, be it physical, mental or emotional, we are not alone. God is always with us, accompanying us and sharing everything with us. Sometimes, when we survive a difficult situation, it is not because of ourselves, but rather because God gave us his hand. That is why in the worst of their suffering and diseases, some people have given us a strong example of courage, trust and faithfulness to God until the last minute of their lives.

This evocation helps us shed light on the reproach of Jesus to the disciples. The sense of his reproach means that the disciples have forgotten that he was with them in that storm. Should something bad happen to them, he had the power to protect them! And indeed that is exactly what he did in calming the storm.

Moreover, the disciples had recourse to Jesus only when their situation became desperate. Jesus does not want us to call upon him only when things go terribly wrong, but at all times. Our faith teaches that any circumstance of life, be it of joy or sadness, is an equal opportunity to open our hearts to the Lord and burst into prayer. The problem, however, is that some people think of God only when they are victims of misfortune and bad luck. When their situation improves, they go back to their routine and turn away from God.

What is needed is a strong faith in God at all times. Even if we go through dark nights in our life, we have to remember that the Lord is always with us, because it is his promise that he will be with us until the end of the world.

Today we want to pray for all our fathers, living and dead, as we celebrate them. May God bless them and give to those who struggle his wisdom and strength so that they fulfill correctly the duty he has given them. May God bless all the new fathers and those who will soon become fathers! May he help them fulfill their duty according to his will! Let us pray also for those who have never had the chance to know their fathers and whose memory they grieve. God bless you all!

Job 38: 1, 8-11; 2 Corinthians 5: 14-17; Mark 4: 35-41



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