

Fr James' homily for the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2021



First Reading: Job 38: 1-11
Second Reading: Second Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 5:14-17
Gospel: Mark 4:35-41

Continuing the theme I mentioned last Sunday of how we count and follow these “ordinary” weeks and Sundays of the year, we will notice more how our systematic reading of the Gospel of St Mark on Sundays now really kicks in. This “year” runs from Advent 2020 to the end of November 2021, and now on most of those Sundays we read Mark’s Gospel pretty much in order. So we can use that to see a little more of how Holy Scripture unfolds for us as we listen, and how the Gospel relates to the rest of the scriptures, drawing them into a unity to tell us more about Christ Jesus.

The opening prayer of Mass today and for the ordinary Masses of this 12th week, or Collect, helps us today. We pray first for the basic wisdom to put worship at the centre of life: **“Grant, O Lord, that we may always revere and love your holy name...”** This clearly is the foundation of being rooted in God and knowing God, and the prayer asks that we be **“...set firm on the foundation of your love.”** That foundation is Jesus Christ, and that love is unchanging and ever faithful. In other words this is a prayer for trust in God, God who we know in Jesus. It is a prayer that we will trust in God’s eternal love for us regardless of the circumstances around us, all stemming from our reverence of his Holy Name.

Trust in God’s providence is a foundation of our faith; we can’t really function without it: that God will bring life from death; will work good we cannot see from our faithfulness. However, that is set against the age old, constant puzzle of suffering, especially of the innocent.

So as we reach the stilling of the storm today in the Gospel, it is set against the climax of the book of Job. *(There’s another biblical symbol linking these scriptures today: that of water. This is a symbol of chaos of all kinds, and both Job and the Gospel show God to bring order from chaos).* Job is a vital book, but a VERY uncomfortable read, for it addresses our experience of meaningless suffering head on and names it unfair and inexplicable: it is brutally honest. There’s much we could say about Job, but today it is the ultimate theme that matters to us: the infinitely complex providence of God. Job poses for us a fundamental question of faith: do we trust God will bring about a good, a meaning from the suffering we hate and do not understand and a good we may never see??

The answer to this we must take from staying close to our Lord Jesus. We know God, we come to know the Father, through Jesus the Son, by the grace and power of the

Holy Spirit. “Not my will but yours” was the ultimate prayer of Christ in the face of his own holocaust of suffering.

Do we trust him? In the Gospel, Jesus invites his disciples to go with him on the lake. (It is a cute saying: the weather forecast of life = guaranteed storm!) Jesus asks if we will go with him to the other side. Not avoiding the storm. Not by magic abolishing the suffering, but with faith that he is in charge and he will take us to a place of his providence. So the disciples ask themselves, as we all do, who is this? We may not know why X, Y and Z is happening, but we need to say that God knows what he is about. As the prayer of Mass today says, this starts with bowing down to worship his Holy Name. When this is our life we are becoming, as St Paul says, a new creation.

Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch.