

## Hope and Faith

**Job 7: 1-4, 6-7; 1 Cor. 3: 16-19, 22-23; Mk. 1: 29-39**

In the First Reading for this Sunday, we meet Job. Job was a chieftain from Arabia who was very wealthy. He had vast herds of livestock. He had a wonderful family with seven sons and three daughters. The sons would take turns giving feasts where there would be much eating and drinking. Job, being a devout man, would get up early the next morning after each feast and offer sacrifices in case his sons had sinned or blasphemed the night before.

Suddenly Job's good fortune was totally reversed. He lost everything: his property, his children, and his health. Of course, Job became depressed but, even though his friends told him to curse God, he refused to do so. Thus, long-suffering Job has become a model of patience and unwavering faith to this day. No doubt, we are familiar with the expression: 'That person has the patience of Job.'

But in today's reading, it appears that Job has given in to depression. Some cynical people have a saying that goes as follows: 'Life sucks and then you die.' Job seems to have adopted this outlook when he describes life as a long period of misery coming to an end without the hope of anything better. Indeed, the absence of hope makes life depressing.

In the Gospel, we read that Jesus represented hope for everyone. He raised Peter's mother-in-law from her sickbed by a touch of His hand. Then, He continued healing the sick and casting out demons from everyone who was brought to Peter's house in the hopes of relief. After doing all of this work, Jesus went off by Himself to pray and His disciples looked for Him everywhere. When they finally found Him, they said: 'Everyone is searching for You.' Of course, everyone was searching for the source of hope; the hope of physical and spiritual healing as well as the hope of salvation.

St. Paul, in the Second Reading, says that his mission was to spread the Good News to everyone who would listen. He saw that this message of hope was so important that he was prepared to spread this message by any means necessary. He was prepared 'to become all things to all people.' Although he was a high-ranking free man, he adopted a posture of weakness and became 'a slave to all' so that they would believe in the hopeful message contained in the Gospel.

These days of tribulation can make us feel like Job. We can identify with his sense of hopelessness as we try to cope with health issues, job loss, homelessness, separation from family, and isolation from friends; not to speak of the effects of climate change, social injustice, and a host of other worries.

All of us are searching for hope; the hope that can be found in Jesus. In the Collect for the Mass this Sunday, 'relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace', we pray for God to defend us and keep us safe from everything that threatens us in the world. Let us adopt the patience of Job as we wait with expectant faith hoping for an end to the pandemic and the other attendant calamities that we face, knowing that God restored Job to his former status, with even greater abundance, because of his steadfast faith.