

February 8, 2009
Fifth Sunday
Ordinary Time
Year B

the Faith connection

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

Monday

Mark 6:53–56

"... and all who touched [his cloak] were healed."

Tuesday

Mark 7:1–13

"You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God..."

Wednesday

Mark 7:14–23

"Listen to me, all of you, and understand."

Thursday

Mark 7:24–30

"Let the children be fed first..."

Friday

Mark 7:31–37

"And immediately his ears were opened..."

Saturday

Mark 8:1–10

"They ate and were filled."

This Sunday's Scripture Readings—Year B

Job 7:1–4, 6–7

1 Corinthians 9:16–19, 22–23

Mark 1:29–39

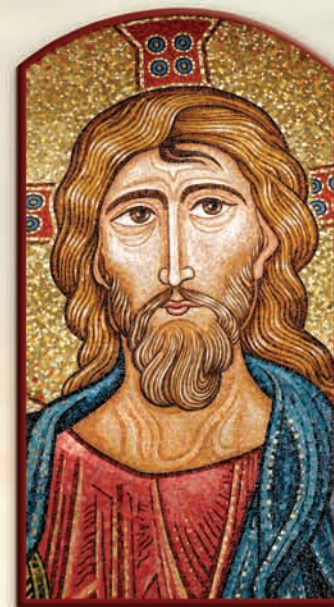
From Despair to Hope and Healing

Today's Scriptures open with the lament of Job whose life had become a meaningless cycle of misery. We have all had days or longer periods of time when suffering and hopelessness fall like a dark veil over everything that was once "life" for us. In these times we are faced with one of two alternatives: we can dwell in the despair or we can seek the life-giving, healing power of Christ.

Mark leads us to the latter choice in this Gospel account of Jesus' power over sickness and evil. First we meet the mother-in-law of Simon in the privacy of her home. Sickness has overcome her spirit when Simon seeks Jesus' intervention.

The account outlines the course of Jesus' actions in a brief but simple narrative. He grasped her hand, helped her up (Mark's word *egeiro* literally means "raised" her up—the same verb used to in describing Jesus' resurrection) and the fever left her. In her healed state, the woman began to serve them.

After a full evening of healing and exorcism in public, Jesus quietly slips away in the early morning to pray alone in the desert. Mark tells us that Jesus was absorbed in prayer. Ultimately the quiet silence led him to enlarge the scope of his ministry from the small town of Capernaum to the whole of Galilee.



The Faith of the Church

The theological virtue of hope arises from the desire for happiness that God has placed in the heart of all people. It moves and inspires our actions and sustains us during times when we feel most alone. Christian hope flows out of Jesus' actions, preaching and passion. Hope anchors the soul, shields us in times of struggle and opens us to joy when we suffer. Through prayer we express and nourish the virtue of hope

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 1818, 1820

Visit us at www.FaithFirst.com

(click on "Faith First for Families," click on "Gospel Reflections")

and share today's Gospel reading as a family.

Questions of the Week

Mark begins the ministry of Jesus with healings and exorcisms. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' ministry begins with his proclamation of his mission to the poor and the marginalized. Both Gospels reveal that God is never divorced from human pain. As Jesus moved through the hectic crowd bringing consolation and hope, God moves in our midst, offering restoring strength.

Adults

How has a difficult time in my life become a source of strength, hope and healing?

Children

When I have asked Jesus for help in the past, and how did he answer my prayer?

Responding to God's Word . . .

Mother-in-law stories always remind me of my own mother-in-law, who was consumed by health concerns all her life. When she contracted cancer and only had a few months to live, she asked to receive the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

A true healing took place with the graces of that sacrament. She was able to surrender to God and began to appreciate the small things in life with great joy and happiness. As she lived her few remaining months with our family, she remarked at the lovely sound of music that wafted through our stereo system, the smell of baking cupcakes and the delight in her young grandchildren.

Hope removes the veil of darkness caused by suffering and unlocks the mysteries of God's healing love in our day. Jesus' compassion for the suffering and enslaved continues to thread its way into

the fabric of our lives. In fact when we absorb ourselves in prayer as he did when stressed by the crowds, the whole focus of our lives can be turned around and expanded.

As long as we are alive and breathing we have a choice to make when difficulties seem to surround us. We can either dwell on the pain and sit in despair or we can allow that struggle to perfect our spirit and enlarge our hearts to accept the healing power of Jesus.

Thus Christian hope in Jesus' healing power is not just the expectation of the early followers of Jesus, but it is the grace of our baptism. Our hope in the power of Christ's healing spirit becomes fruitful when we respond in joy and share that hope with others who are in need of encouragement, compassion and healing.

Suggestions

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's word this week.

In the home. Make a list of the family, friends and world situations that are in need of Jesus' healing and post it on your refrigerator. Say a short prayer each time you pass the list.

In the workplace or in school. Instead of complaining out of pessimism and dejection, start a notebook in which you record three small and simple things for which you are grateful each day.

In the community. Gather parishioners who like to cook, and organize a meal ministry to those who are sick or struggling with economic adversities.

Meditation Moment

One day a friend visited Henri Matisse, the French artist. Noticing how filled with stress his friend seemed to be, Matisse said, "Andre, you must find the artichokes in your life." Then he led his friend to a patch of artichokes in his garden and said, "Each morning, after I have worked a while, I come here to be still and meditate. This simple ritual inspires me and gives me a new perspective to my work."

For reflection . . .

To what extent does quiet meditation relax me and give me a new perspective toward my work?

AT COOL OF DAY, WITH GOD I WALK
MY GARDEN'S GRATEFUL SHADE;
I HEAR HIS VOICE AMONG THE TREES
AND I AM NOT AFRAID.

ANONYMOUS

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Profile of Faith

St. Rita of Cascia (1381–1457). Because of the Christian example of her parents, Rita had a strong faith in God. However, because of the tumultuous times, her parents decided she should marry rather than dedicate her life to God through religious life. Her husband Paolo died an unexpected and violent death and, within two years, both of her sons had also died. Rita then dedicated her life to works of charity and prayer. Ultimately she decided to spend the rest of her life as an Augustinian. Through the many crosses she bore, Rita is a sign of hope and service. Her feast day is celebrated May 22.

GUIDEPOST

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted and lifts up the downtrodden.

BASED ON PSALM 147

You are God

Jesus you are my hope; my source of strength; my rock of safety.

My heart cries out to you in despair and desolation.

I wait in the quiet stillness.

Heal me and bring peace and joy into my life once again.

*My life is held in your gentle grasp,
But I no longer despair for I realize you are God.
Amen.*

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Msgr. Robert M. Coerver, Censor Librorum
IMPRIMATUR
† Most Reverend Kevin J. Farrell, DD, Bishop of Dallas
October 9, 2008

The Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur are official declarations that the material reviewed is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those granting the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

Author: Carol A. Gura

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Front photo: Gene Plaisted OSC/The Crosiers

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright 1989, 1993, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© 2008 RCL Benziger. All rights reserved.

The Faith Connection™ is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and is published weekly by RCL Benziger, 200 E. Bethany Dr., Allen, TX 75002.

877-275-4725

Contact us at RCLBenziger.com

