

# ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

**5th Sunday  
in Ordinary Time, B  
February 7, 2021**

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**Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa  
Pastor**

**For the time being, our Sunday Masses are held outdoors, by the Parish Hall, on Saturdays at 4:30 PM and on Sundays at 8:30 AM. Please come in a face mask and observe social distancing (6 ft. between people of different households).**

**The annual World Day of  
Prayer for Consecrated  
Life is celebrated this  
weekend — Feb. 6-7, 2021.**

Please pray for all who have made commitments in the consecrated life, and be sure to thank them on their special day.

May they continue to be inspired by Jesus Christ and respond generously to God's gift of their vocation.

## **1st Reading:**

*Job 7:1-4, 6-7*

Job spoke, saying:

Is not man's life on earth a drudgery? Are not his days those of hirelings? He is a slave who longs for the shade, a hireling who waits for his wages.

So I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been allotted to me.

If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?" then the night drags on; I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope. Remember that my life is like the wind; I shall not see happiness again.

*The Word of the Lord.*

stars; he calls each by name.

**R.**

Great is our Lord and mighty in power; to his wisdom there is no limit. The LORD sustains the lowly; the wicked he casts to the ground.

**R.**

**Lector: Alleluia, alleluia.**

**All: Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Lector:** Christ took away our infirmities and bore our diseases.

**All: Alleluia, alleluia.**

## **Gospel: Mark 1:29-39**

On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." He told them, "Let us go on to

## **2nd Reading:**

*1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23*

Brothers and sisters: If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

What then is my recompense? That, when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some.

All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.

*The Word of the Lord.*

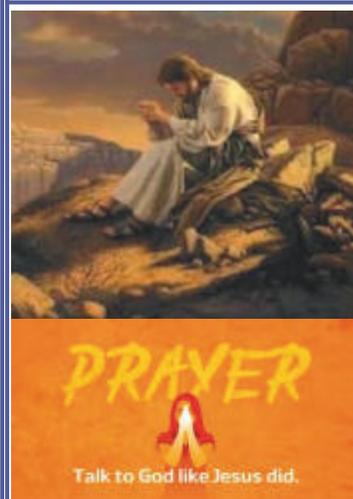
## **Responsorial Psalm:**

**"Praise the Lord  
who heals the  
brokenhearted."**

Praise the LORD, for he is good; sing praise to our God, for he is gracious; it is fitting to praise him. The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem; the dispersed of Israel he gathers.

**R.**

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He tells the number of the



the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose, have I come."

So, he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

## **ACCLAMATION:**

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.

# REFLECTING ON THE WORD . . . . GUIDEPOSTS

## INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S READINGS

In ten days, Lent will begin and we will be reminded of Jesus' sufferings, from forty days in the desert to his passion and death, but today we hear *Job* lamenting the tragedies that have come to define his life. His sufferings are, to him, incomprehensible. He has lost all hope. None of us suffer as greatly as Job, but we have reason to hope. The *psalmist* reassures us that the Lord heals the wounded and brokenhearted. *Paul* willingly embraces his difficulties for the gospel. *Jesus* places the healing of the sick and troubled at the heart of his ministry. May today's readings make us look for hope in the Lord.

## WHY DOES A JUST MAN HAVE TO SUFFER?

The Book of Job (cf. today's first reading) is a piece of world literature and is most outstanding for its topic: "Why does a just man have to suffer?"

Till the time of Job it was traditional belief that God rewards the good man and punishes the bad man already here on earth. There was as yet no understanding of a life after death or of a reward in heaven. Consequently, if somebody suffers, it can only be because he sinned. This is then also the opinion of the three friends of Job, but not of the author of the book or of Job himself. Job's unswerving faithfulness was rewarded in the end. Everything that he lost was restored twofold, his cup of success and prosperity overflowed.

The story of Job teaches that a good, faithful life in this world is no guarantee that you'll be immune from trials and sufferings. Jesus too, was concerned with the problem of human suffering in all its forms. We see him in the gospel curing people who were afflicted in various ways, ranging from diabolical possession to the simple fever of Peter's mother-in-law (cf. Mk 1:30). But Jesus did not intend to stamp out all physical evil and sufferings in this life. He himself had to undergo terrible sufferings. Suffering, he taught, is part and parcel of human existence --- "a problem not to be solved but a mystery to be lived." He was as if saying:

*"If I don't take away all your sufferings, it is not because I cannot do so, or because I do not love you enough. But buried deep within the human nature is the reality that fulfillment comes from the passage to life **through** suffering and death. The best I can do is to tell you this . . . then ask you to follow me and have faith in me."*

This is the reason, contrary to Job who is deeply depressed, St. Paul in today's second reading is full of enthusiasm with his ministry of preaching the gospel. He's not doing it because he wants to get rich (actually, for the most part he provided for his own needs, working as a tentmaker).

## THE VALUABLE QUESTION

Thus, the valuable question about our personal suffering is not "why?" but "What am I going to do with it?"

The answer is a staple of Catholic spirituality, commonly known as "offering it up." This means to accept suffering in union with Christ who, even though Son of God, accepted horrific suffering and death for love of us. Ever since Christ died for us, for our redemption, our suffering shall be apostolic and vicarious too. This is the deepest answer to the question why a just man has to suffer.

As St. Paul says: "*I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of the body, the church*" (Col 1:24). We are fortunate to have this transforming revelation that Job did not have.

## CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL



After a full day of preaching and healing, Jesus retreats to bed, then rises before dawn to slip away into the wilderness to pray.

Jesus leaves with us a model that clearly shows that the fulfillment of every activity depends upon prayer. What we accomplish in a busy day may depend on what we do early in the morning. By surrendering to God first, we are acknowledging that any good we accomplish is only flowing through us. This frees us from any notion that we ourselves are the source. For the people of Galilee, the many healings performed by Jesus in and around Capernaum in today's Gospel could have only come from the hand of God.

And remember what we have learned from the previous Sundays, that the heart or climax of authentic prayer is contemplation of God's presence. St. Teresa describes contemplative prayer as "nothing else than a **close sharing between friends**; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him (God/Jesus) who we know loves us. '

It is in the context of contemplative prayer that St. Teresa *complained to Jesus about all the suffering she had to bear. Jesus answered her with, "That's the way I treat my friends." To which she replied, "No wonder you have so few."*

In the same way, it is in the context of contemplative prayer that St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta says, "*I find it hard sometimes to smile at Jesus. He can be very demanding.*"

## THE CONTEXT OF THE SECOND READING

Our second reading is difficult to understand without knowing the context. Paul is not usually given to boasting, but here he is using himself to inspire the Corinthians to follow his example.

The situation at Corinth he is addressing concerned eating meat sacrificed to idols. There were those who thought there was no problem because idols were not really gods anyway. However, this created scandal for other Christians and it was a source of division.

Paul said, the first group are theologically correct, but they should forego the right to eat meat sacrificed to idols for the sake of love for their brothers and sisters who did not understand and for the sake of unity. Then he speaks of himself, saying he has given up certain rights he could claim, including the right to be paid for his work, so that he could win more people to the gospel of Christ.

## A REMINDER RE CORONA VIRUS:

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person, typically through respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, or talking. Airborne transmission is infection spread through exposure to those virus-containing respiratory droplets comprised of smaller droplets and particles that can remain suspended in the air over long distances (usually greater than 6 feet) and time (typically hours). Also, it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

### *When should I quarantine for the coronavirus disease?*

- \* You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more.
- \* You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- \* You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them), even for a few seconds.
- \* You shared eating or drinking utensils.

### *Do I still need to quarantine after I tested negative for COVID-19 but was exposed to someone who has COVID-19?*

**Yes.** You should still self-quarantine for 14 days since your last exposure. It can take up to 14 days after exposure to the virus for a person to develop COVID-19 symptoms. **A negative result before end of the 14-day quarantine period does not rule out possible infection.** By self-quarantining for 14 days, you lower the chance of possibly exposing others to COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home for 14 days if you think you've been exposed to someone who has COVID-19.

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

### CELEBRANT:

Jesus' disciples brought him all who were sick and suffering and he healed them. As his disciples, we bring our needs to the Lord and ask for God's healing.

### LECTOR:

1) For the Church, that we may carry the mission of Jesus Christ, caring for the sick and wounded, the burdened and broken, bringing the strength and comfort of the Lord to them and their loved ones, *let us pray to the Lord.*

2) For those consecrated to God by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, that they may seek to live their baptismal promises more intensely and have the grace to persevere in their commitment to the Lord and serve with open hearts and willing spirits, *let us pray to the Lord.*

3) For those who are discerning their vocation in life, that they may open their hearts to a call to consecrated life and be given the courage to respond generously, *let us pray to the Lord.*

4) We pray for all who participate in the healing ministry of Christ: for doctors, nurses, therapists, chaplains, and all who tend to the sick; and for those who make this ministry possible — support staff and administrators, researchers and benefactors, *let us pray to the Lord.*

5) For those who are sick or in pain, for those suffering with depression, anxiety and other conditions that make it difficult to cope with day-to-day life, *let us pray to the Lord.*

### CELEBRANT:

Loving God, you respond to our suffering with words of compassion, assurances of love, and the promise of eternal life with you. Hold us in your loving arms as you grant the prayers we make through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### *Some Fraternal Concerns*

\* I realized only afterwards that during the homily at last Saturday's Mass, I just got so carried away that for a moment I forgot social distancing and moved about very close physically to the assembly. I should be more careful. I should just stay by the altar or the stand when giving the homily.

\* I sanitize my hands just before the start of the Mass, and then again just before the offertory, and again just before giving communion to the assigned lay minister of communion. As regards the latter, I could be so absorbed in my reception of the Lord/Eucharist and the giving of the same to the minister that I may miss sanitizing my hands first before giving communion to the communion minister. If this happens, that is to say, if right after drinking from the chalice I grab the ciborium without sanitizing my hands first, I would like that the assigned minister of communion remind me by whispering to me the word "sanitize."

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