

5th SUNDAY REFLECTION YEAR B 2021
RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

What a great theme and a challenging one to face in our current world situation. We all need positive ways of responding to suffering without bitterness, isolation, and self-absorption. This response is hard to escape especially when we are sick.

Like Job in our first reading, we, too, have many questions in our mind, and also find ourselves complaining to God about difficult situations in our lives, especially today. Why this pandemic? Who caused it? Is it God's punishment? Is it human made? When is it going to end? Will we ever go back to a normal way of life? Why is it claiming so many lives? Why are there so many sicknesses in the world? Why should my child have cancer at such a young tender age? Why should I have this incurable disease? Why was I fired from my job? Why is my marriage in a storm? Why is my relationship so strained?

Dear friends in Jesus Christ, this list can go on and on and obviously we need to withdraw to that lonely place like Jesus and connect and communicate to our Heavenly Father in silence trying to get some answers. He will hear us and He will listen to each and every issue we face.

Like Job are we not wrestling with all these unexplained issues? Job was a good man. He had challenges of sickness, loss of property, family members who made him suffer. He had a gloomy view of life, "**I shall never see happiness again.**" Difficult situations in life can make us desperate, like Job.

We have many problems facing us in life, ***sickness, poverty, hunger, injustice, wars, oppression, and tragedies.***

Do we see them as coming from God? How do we look at them?

How do we address them? Can we address them like Job with an eye and ear of faith? Job persevered and responded positively to them by **TRUSTING IN GOD.**

What is your response to suffering? This can only be answered by you alone! Our God is merciful and kind. He will always listen to us at all times and in whatever situation we find ourselves. Into this world of sickness, suffering, and death comes Jesus Christ in the Gospel of today. He heals Simon's mother-in-law and so many others who were suffering from different ailments. Can't we, too, take our sickness and suffering to Him. The invitation is there, "**let's go also to other places**". Might the other places be our families, our country, our world, our hearts, ourselves?

He didn't want to see people suffering. This was His mission, "**preaching freedom to captives, to cure and heal the sick, to uplift the downtrodden, and to give life.**" Is He not doing this in the Gospel today? Is He not doing it in our present day society? He is healing us both physically and spiritually. The deepest healing we need is spiritual, and Jesus is available in all these moments of suffering. Through Him we will be able to see suffering as a condition of **strength to us and compassion to others** rather than **isolation and bitterness.**

Jesus gives us the example of not only being available to the suffering of others but of being aware of Himself and His need to connect with His Heavenly Father. **He knew where to get strength for this mission to sustain His way of life and be available to others.** It was in that **MOUNTAIN**, in that **LONELY PLACE, where** he went very early in the morning after curing and healing all kind of diseases and dropping devils away. He was **all things to all people (second reading).** Yet He needed time for Himself and for God.

Don't we need such a moment? Do you have time to connect with your God? In the midst of this busy world do you go to that mountain early

in the morning to that lonely place?

Prayer fostered Jesus' relationship with His Father. Prayer will always give us strength. It is the secret of success in our activities. We need to withdraw occasionally to **recharge** and **reconnect** with our God if we are to continue our mission here on earth. We must **examine and re-examine** ourselves once in a while if we want to stay focused.

We must stay connected to our GOD.