

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – B

The gospel reading continues from last week's reading, Jesus leaves the synagogue goes to Simon and Andrew's house where Simon's mother-in-law is indisposed and Jesus heals her. That evening after sunset, the Sabbath now over they brought 'all who were sick...and he cured many.' In the morning 'long before dawn' Jesus leaves and goes to 'a lonely place and prays there.' The disciples find him and want Jesus to return continue his work of healing but Jesus goes to the whole of Galilee preaching and healing. In the first reading we listen to Job explaining how man's life is a life of suffering. In the second reading Paul explains his duty of preaching the gospel.

The **First Reading** is from the book of Job the first of the wisdom books found in the Bible. The book is described as a literary masterpiece. It introduces Job as a faithful servant of God, a rich and happy man and then God allows Satan to test Job. He loses his possessions and children and then his body is racked with sickness, but Job remains faithful to God even though his wife tells him to curse God. Then three friends come to offer Job sympathy. After this introduction, ch.1-2, a long dialogue poem follows, ch.3-27, in which Job's three friends discuss the situation in a four-cornered conversation. Their solutions: the happiness of the wicked is short-lived the sufferings of the good test their fortitude or possibly punish faults committed unwittingly or out of weakness. They think their friend innocent but Job's cries of anguish in pain and his impatience with God persuade them that his guilt goes deep. A fourth character, Elihu, develops these thoughts, the sufferings of the upright are expiation for sins of omission or of thoughtlessness or possibly a safeguard against more serious faults and a cure for pride. In his anguish Job reaches out for God; God eludes him but Job still trusts in his goodness. When God does appear it is to tell Job how inscrutable are his ways and his designs, and Job falls to silence. This is the book's lesson: faith must remain even when understanding fails.

The reading, 7.1-4,6-7, is part of Job's speech in response to what the first of his friends have said and Job describes his life now as he sees it, conscript service, hired drudgery, a slave, or someone who works only for what he earns. His days and nights are full of grief, with little to hope for. The last two lines are a prayer asking God for a few moments of peace before he dies. His trust in God is still there.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 146.1-6, is a psalm which celebrates God as the liberator of Israel, the Creator, and friend of the lowly. We have this psalm today to illustrate perhaps Job's faith expressed in the words of the Psalm.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul evangelised the church at Corinth between A.D. 50 and 52. His policy was to establish the Christian faith in a centre of population, and here he chose the great and populous port of Corinth, so that the faith could spread to the whole of the province of Achaia. The Christian community grew strong composed mainly of poor people, but Corinth was a centre of Greek life, philosophy and religions. It was also a notorious centre of immorality which was to cause problems for the newly converted. In 1 Corinthians Paul addresses urgent problems that faced the church there and the decisions that had to be made to address these problems such as moral conduct, marriage and virginity, liturgical and Eucharistic meetings, charisms, matters concerning the Church and the world, appeals to civil courts, eating foods sacrificed to idols. Paul's religious genius enabled him to turn use all these problems into a vehicle for the profound doctrine of Christian liberty, the sanctification of the body, the supremacy of love, union with Christ. Paul teaches the Corinthians that there is only one master, Christ, and only one message, the cross which is the one true wisdom.

The reading, 9.16-19,22-23, is part of a longer section in which Paul says a Christian should be guided by love, then at some length he says how he himself has given up some of his rights as an apostle out of consideration for others. In the reading Paul explains why he preaches the gospel and that he does not charge any one for this service although he has a right to do so. He explains that he accommodates himself to all kinds of situations in order to win people over to the gospel teaching and so share its benefits with others.