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Daily Reflections

Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany

ALWAYS GIVING PRAISE

By Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ

Today's First Reading

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.

JOB 7:1-4, 6-7

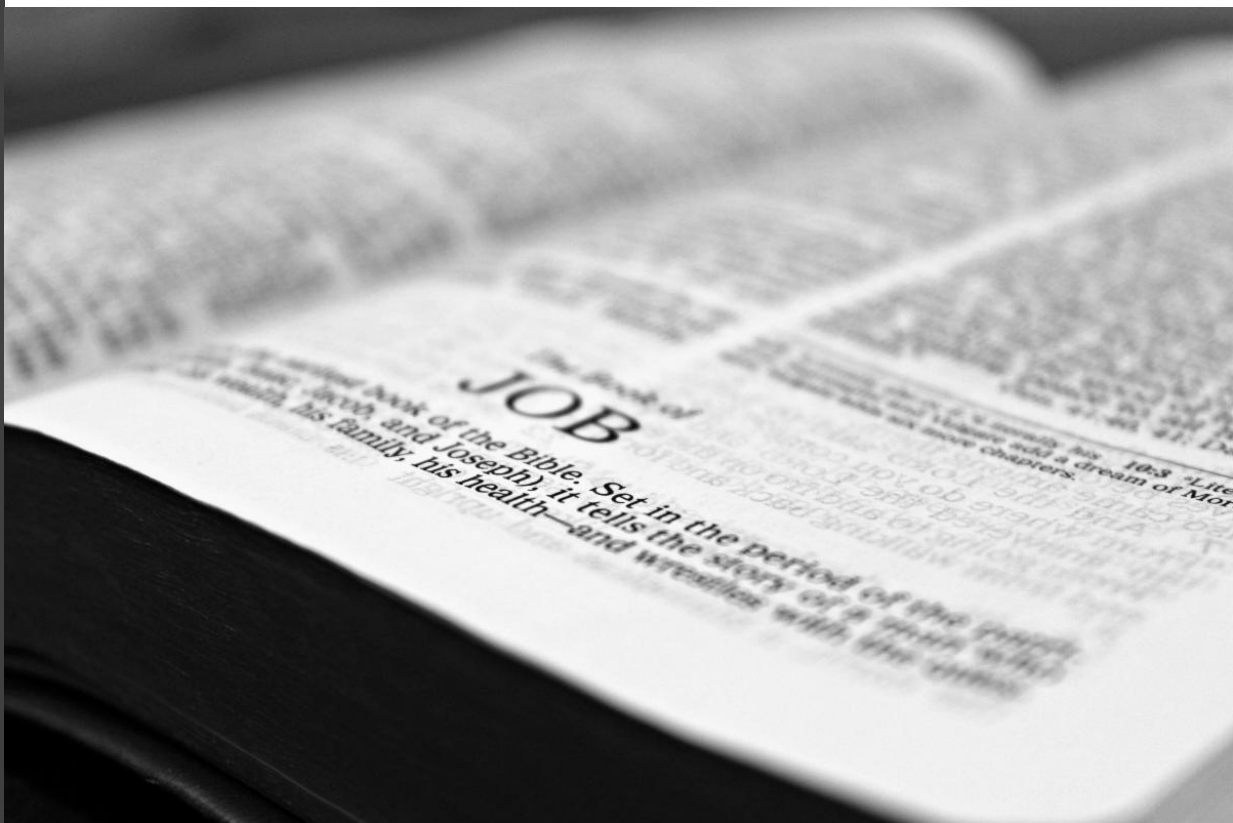
Reflection

Job, a book among the biblical Wisdom writings, is dated at least 3rd century BCE and represents a legendary hero known in many cultures of the ancient Near East, i.e., the figure of the suffering innocent person. Similar stories are

featured in Egypt around 1800 BCE and in Babylonia in 1500-1200 BCE. Clearly, suffering occupies the lives of humanity.

As the author of Job reflects on the meaning of suffering, it is seen as a deep mystery, experienced yet not really understood. At the end of the book, Job admits: “I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know, on marvels beyond me.” (Job 42:3) Basically Job is saying to God: “I don’t understand suffering!” And God says: “I know you don’t understand.” Understanding suffering isn’t what is needed as much as letting the LORD hold and heal the brokenhearted (Ps. 147:3).

Imagine that you, Job, and God are seated around a kitchen table discussing the topic of suffering. What do you hear? What do you say?



The book of Job
Photo by Tabitha Guarnieri

Today's Second Reading

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.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-19, 22-23

Reflection

Paul describes his preaching as a stewardship coming from a holy energy imposed on him by God rather than something of his own invention. His “style” of service and freedom is to adapt himself to the needs of others. “. . . 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.”

What do you say to Paul about his style of service? How would you describe your style of service to him?

Do suffering and service walk “hand-in-hand” or are they separate entities?

Today's Gospel

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 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.

MARK 1:29-39

Reflection

Jesus has the freedom to move both inside human reality (Peter's house) and outside to the village of Capernaum. He actively brings the presence of the reign of God overcoming the suffering of darkness/disease. Through his healing and teaching, people of the nearby village are made whole. He notes: "For this purpose have I come." Jesus is totally given over to serving the wounded world, to restoring sick persons to their proper place in the community. In this passage, the sick mother-in-law is restored to return to her family and lepers are made whole to rejoin the community of God.

Where in your life is the healing reign of God present?

In what ways do you assist the "purpose" of Jesus?

For Prayer

IN PRAISE

*Dear God of compassion,
Your mercies are with me always ---
every moment of my life,
with each breath I take.
Only you can love me
so completely,
so unconditionally,
so profoundly.*

*I open my heart to you in deep gratitude!
Amen.*

REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLOV [ADAPTED]

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