

Daily Homily
5 Ordinal 2021
7 February 2021
[USCCB Daily Readings](#)

Wow that first reading – Job! Could we not label that one: the Year of 2020 going into 2021? Does it not resonate to some degree with all of us? Any other year, we would probably listen to it and say, “Geez, Job, get a grip... Why the drama? “

We only hear from Job twice in the course of our three year liturgical reading cycle ... at least as far as Sunday Mass goes. And both of those times happens this year, today and then after the Lent and Easter Seasons, we will hear from Job again ... and then not for another three years, at least on a Sunday.

Such a downer, right? So depressing. There isn't a hopeful note in the whole excerpt. Even the note it ends on... “I shall not see happiness again.” We are left sitting in his doom and despair.

But if you remember the whole story... the book tries to answer the reason for suffering, especially, why do good people, faithful people suffer. Shouldn't people like you and me... shouldn't we be exempt from suffering? Job was faithful to God. God, however, it would seem, allowed Job to suffer. Job lost everything... wife, children, livestock, home, land, even his health... he lost everything.

Except two things... His unwavering, undivided, whole force – 100% commitment to his faith and love for God... that even if all these bad things were happening, it would not diminish his love, his faith in God. He had that going for him.

The other thing that Job did not lose were three of his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. You don't hear those names too much today ... maybe for good reason. They were horrible friends. These friends were strong voices in Job's life, and they were strong voices in his suffering. Their advice was anything but wise, knowledgeable, understanding and not prayerful at all. They just weren't helpful. Instead of being friends who comforted, they only brought more suffering ... and maybe in their case, a worse kind of suffering... not just physical suffering but mental and emotional and spiritual suffering as well. The three are strong voices in his life.

So there is Job... teetering between his fidelity to God and fidelity to friends. He was going through great suffering ... God, on one hand, was silent and passive; Job's friends are, on the other hand, more assertive, reckless, and whose advice is just all wrong. In the end he had to be discerning which voice to listen to... the voice of love for God or the voice of his friends. He had to discern carefully which direction he was going to take. Give into the suffering, the cynicism, the jadedness as his friends suggested or cling to God even more so in the pain and desolation.

It would seem in this reading that he is choosing his friends' voice, it would seem he is going to their side. However, this lament, this outpouring of emotion and despair and depression

changes ... as Job goes directly to God and asks Him... but, unfortunately, he asks the wrong question ... he asks, "Why?" Never ask God, "Why?" He says to some degree... "Why are you allowing me to suffer?" God response is classic. God's answer is another question: "Who are you to question me?"

Job is humbled, put in his rightful place, arrogance all expelled, self-righteousness annihilated, he knows his place as creature before the Creator, as son before the Father, as beloved before the Lover, Job clings to God all the more, and even in his suffering his fidelity is deepened, his love expands for the Almighty.

Not to leave you hanging ... things turn around for Job, read the whole book... it's relatively short in Scripture. Does the book answer the question, "Why do good people suffer?" ... Not really.

What's it say to us?

Much suffering out there today... some warranted, some not so much so. Many inconveniences we still have to endure, that are just that, inconveniences – not really suffering. Many voices out there today? Many ways to bring those voices into our lives, some can't keep opinions to themselves, all thoughts ... right or wrong ... truth and lies ... can be accessed 24 hours, 7 days a week. We need to be discerning what and whom we listen to... especially when we feel the most vulnerable and at a loss. Otherwise, like Job's friends ... those voices may lead us down a path we shouldn't be walking.

Whose voice is most influential in your life today and during this time? Whose voice do you turn to in your life for your direction, guidance, your on-going learning especially in the most valuable area of life – your Catholic faith?

Whose voice has the influence?

Be Job, discern the voice of God. This skill is nuanced and honed every time we come to Mass. When we miss Mass, the skill is diminished. How does our gathering help us to know the voice of God?

First, actively listen to the prayers we pray... the prayers of the Mass should reflect our prayers for our life... This may be a new insight for many... A celibate, male priest offering the Eucharist Prayer in just a few moments. Ever since the 1970's a loud voice of criticism over this, my hunch is that voice will only grow more vindictive in the days ahead. Do you ever care, why it is this way? Let me try to explain concisely...

It is about spousal love and what all spouses should be doing for one another. As priestly husband to his bride, the Church... do you hear the feminine pronouns we pray in reference to the Church... the dignity and respect that I hold for such a woman, praying for her wellbeing,

her peace, her unity, her reconciliation. This prayer is not only about consecrating bread and wine into the real presence of Jesus' body and blood... this prayer... if we really listen to it as the voice of God... shows us how to love and how to pray and how to treat one another with profound respect. Listen to the Eucharistic Prayer today as the voice of God directing all your prayers in the ways of love for the ones you love.

Second, the silence we keep. God is a friend to silence. If you want to hear the voice of God, turn off the noise, shut down the technology, the voice of social media for awhile, usually it's the loudest voice that gets our attention and almost always it's the loudest voice that should be ignored. Seek silence ... like the silent moments of the Mass... they are here for a reason... to absorb what is going on, and to listen for what God wants to say. Embrace the silence, it is a good friend that won't lead you astray.

Third, The Scripture readings we read... this is no ordinary reading ... it's sacred, holy, from God's mouth to our ears, our lives, our hearts, our souls. God speaks to us in this moment through these readings that are given to us for our reflection and our prayer. These words make a difference. Listen for the word God wants to offer to you in this gathering. They are ancient words that are made ever anew in our living them out today.

In Job's suffering so many voices wanting to infiltrate his trials. We too, have too many voices out there, and most of us, especially our younger ones, have access to them all. Many of them are like Job's friends – bad advice that want to lead us astray. Don't listen to them. Instead, do what Job did... cling to God first, remain faithful and not just faithful but "in love" with God, and even in the suffering or ongoing suffering tune your ear to the sound of his voice, open your heart to the words of his mouth, discern carefully, what God is saying ... for His is the voice that can cure illness, cast out demons, and lift up suffering spirits.