

Rev. Derek Fairman

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time B

The Gospel for this Sunday finds us back on the same day that the Lord Jesus taught in the synagogue. After leaving the synagogue, the Lord Jesus cures Simon's mother-in-law. Later many brought people who were sick to the Lord Jesus, and He cured them. However, the Lord Jesus moved on, and His purpose was to preach, not just to cure people of illness. We know that the Lord Jesus did not cure everyone who was ill.

Why did the Lord Jesus not cure everyone who was ill? The Lord Jesus went to the towns and villages in order to give people faith, so that they could put their faith in Him. So, again, the Lord's primary purpose in visiting was to preach, to draw people to have faith in Him. He did not come to replace physicians or simply to take away everyone's illnesses. He did not work miracles simply because He could. He cured many as a way of showing mercy, as a way of showing people that He was the Lord and that they could put their faith in Him.

Death comes to everyone, and I suppose that disease, in different forms, comes to everyone as well. There are times in which disease and injury are actually the direct result of some wrong that we have done: abusing drugs, for example. There are other times in which those who have done nothing wrong suffer anyway. There seems to be a lack of justice: people suffer for something even though they have done nothing wrong themselves. There are many questions that arise in our hearts.

There are no easy answers, but some reflections might help. We remember from the Book of Wisdom that God did not make death. He does not rejoice in our death, nor does He rejoice in our illnesses. Injustice is also not the design that God has for our world. There are ways that we can make the most of our sufferings, since we cannot take them away.

We remember that the Lord is the Divine Physician, and that He not only brings healing for the body, but for the soul. For the people that the Lord Jesus healed, they were prepared for Him and their physical healings were accompanied by spiritual healings. They learned to rely on the Lord Jesus, to put their trust in Him. So, they did not solely rely on themselves or on someone else, but on the Lord Jesus.

This was important since the Lord was not going to stay there. Once the Lord Jesus ascended to Heaven, He would not come back to earth every time someone became ill again. However, the people could put their faith and their trust in the Lord Jesus. Sometimes having that

faith meant that a person who was ill could recover, but not always. Whether a person was in good health or not, faith was still important. That is still true today.

Death may come to everyone, and illness may touch everyone, but not everyone has faith and some refuse the gifts that God brings to them. Faith helps us to endure suffering. Faith helps us to keep things in perspective: that God is just, and although there seem to be many instances of suffering in our world, there are also many instances of joy. Faith also helps us to see that there is more to life than just our suffering.

Often when we face some kind of difficulty, whether it has to do with our health or not, our faith in God is what brings us strength. Difficult news can unsteady us, but faith keeps us strong and steady. With faith, we can get through those times. When the Lord Jesus saw the people, He did not just see their physical illnesses. He also saw that for some, they had trouble finding something to holding on to. They were looking for hope. They did not know where to turn or what to do.

We also remember that there were those who brought the sick to Him. They were not sick, but they brought their family members who were sick to His feet so that He could cure them. In curing the sick, He also acknowledged the pain of those who cared for them. He recognized the burden that they carried. By curing those who were ill, the Lord Jesus healed an entire family. The Lord Jesus can still bring healing to families even without physical healing.

Today as we approach the altar, we ask the Lord to bring healing to us. The Lord brings healing not just to our bodies but to our souls. The Lord invites us to come to Him, since His yoke is easy and His burden is light. We can actually make the most of the sufferings that we have to endure. Perhaps we have had some kind of illness, and after we recovered, we realized that we had learned a lot, or we felt stronger because of the illness. We were full of hope that we could deal with other illnesses in the future. We can also make the most of our illnesses by offering our suffering for the benefit of others.

Today we also pray for all those in our parish, in our families, among our friends and neighbors who have to suffer, especially those who suffer physically. We pray that the Lord may bring them faith, the faith that has brought us through many difficulties. We ask the Lord to give us the graces to help them, especially to help them focus on the positive and not just the negative. We ask the Lord to bring joy to those who suffer through our generosity.