

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - February 4, 2018

All of us at Mass, today, has at one at one time or another has experienced loss. Loss may entail, a death in the family, we lose a job, a relationship ends in divorce, how about a life changing medical diagnosis, the word cancer can be devastating, a student doesn't pass an exam for which they studied so hard to get a scholarship. Each one of us could fill pages and pages of loss in a short time. The immediate answers to these losses are: Why me? Life is not fair? What have I done to deserve this? I am not a bad person! We may blame ourselves or we may blame someone else. A woman told me that she was angry with her husband because he died and left her alone! However, her reaction did not change the situation one bit. The response to despair is hope and hope comes when we surrender ourselves to God and his plan.

Today, scripture gives us the famous figure of Job and his trials. Job has been stripped of wife, children, property and health. His friends accuse him of some wrong doing and that he is being punished for something that he did or did not do. He has moved into heart break hotel and sees no reason to live. He has to realize that he is not in control and that he has never been in control for that is God's department. This process takes time and soul searching on Job's part. When we are holding a pity party for ourselves we should turn to the Book of Job. This might be a good Lenten project to read Job more closely. God was patient with Job and He is patient with us while we learn how to surrender to God!

St. Paul has learned how to surrender but this took a life time! Paul says: I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ. Paul's inner peace was so complete that he could sing hymns while chained in some dark and dirty dungeon.

Jesus gives us the best model in his life as given to us in the Gospel. Jesus surrendered his life to the will of the Father. He was not just a healer or a wonder worker. No, He came to obey the Father, sacrifice himself and bring us salvation and freedom from all that holds us back even death itself. He wants to help us see the big picture and how we can unite ourselves to his suffering, death and resurrection. Prayer in union with our Lord will help us see the Big Picture as He sees in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We need to listen to God through the Bible, the teachings of the Church, private prayer and the Mass and other people. Then we need to surrender and then to obey. As we celebrate Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross at Mass let us be one with Jesus as he said: Father into your hands I commend my spirit. We are called to nothing less than total surrender if we are to be worthy of Christ.