

B5Ord – Lifting Pain to Purpose
February 5, 2006

In our first reading we listen to Job's lament concerning his life's drudgery.

I wondered what Mrs. Job might write.

So I on Wednesday I gathered Rita Dwyer, Barb Perry and Mary Carol Wall to discuss the scriptures and how they might apply to their experience as mothers.

One by one they shared their remembrances of being young mothers. I've put their comments into the context of being written by Mrs. Job.

“Is not a mother's life on earth a drudgery?
Are not her days those of a hireling?
She is a slave, who longs for a day off.
A hireling who waits for her wages.

I spend my days surrounded by babies.
I am sick with a bad cold but must work
nevertheless.
For there is no one to care for me.

The washing machine is broken and dirty diapers
are piling up – no pun intended.
Now the toilet has backed up into the kitchen sink.
Babies are crying,
Toddlers are climbing on top of each other to get
out of the playpen.
Soup has just boiled over in the kitchen and the
stove is a mess.

I could just walk right out of here
but my husband and I have an agreement –
 ‘Whoever leaves first – has to take the kids.’
And his Royal Highness will be coming home
soon, expecting his lunch to be on the table.

I don’t know how much more of this I can
handle.”

Barb recalls how she used to remind herself that
 “God never gives you more than you can handle.”

My homily helpers laughed and
Rita recalled how she “handled it”
on a particularly stressful day when,
at the supper table, her husband complained
about something he didn’t like about the way
she was “handling things” . . .

 “I got up, took my bowl of ice cream and
 dumped it onto his head. Then I poured his
 coffee on top. I handled it all right.

 The next day he showed up for lunch –
 with a rose.”

In today’s Gospel Mark tries to depict a typical day in
Jesus’ life.

Following a time of prayer and teaching in the synagogue,
Jesus and his apostles, head for Peter’s house.

He finds that Peter’s Mother in Law is ill . . .
So he cures her – so she can make them lunch.
Just kidding.

By evening, the word has spread and from everywhere come people who are sick, or “possessed by demons” all begging for him to cure them. He cures them but it exhausts him so he heads for a “deserted place” to recharge his energy with prayer.

Simon interrupts his solitude because still others are in need of being healed. “Everyone is looking for you,” Simon says . . . and he is correct.

So Jesus heads out again to preach good news to people like Job, and Mrs. Job and hundreds like them for in this life . . .

- drudgery, sickness, pain,
- and tormented spirits . . . are everywhere.

And Jesus understands that . . .

“It is for this purpose that I have come.”

Were there days when Jesus’ life must have felt like Job’s or Job’s wife?

Were there days when he felt so engulfed in the problems of others, that he felt suffocated by them?

Scene for JC Superstar – “See my eyes.”

“There’s too many of you. Stop touching me.
I can’t take this. Get away!”

What’s the difference between . . .

- how he “handled” these times and
- dumping a bowl of ice cream on someone’s head . . . or worse . . . much, much worse?

Jesus finds time, no requires time to get away.
 Despite the constant pressure to be all things to all people, Jesus seeks out time in a quiet place to talk with his Father.

It is here that he is renewed in his understanding of the meaning and purpose of his life.

It is here that he learns that our work need not be . . .

- Drudgery for drudgery sake
- Slavery for slavery sake

It is here that he learns that he will not be asked to suffer and die for suffering sake –
 but to free others from eternal suffering and death.

His life's work becomes a choice he makes to be available to others. .

He will freely give what he has been given to help others and share the Good News with them.

He will accept whatever pain it takes

- because he knows that his life has purpose.

And because of time spent in prayer-conversation

- speaking and listening to his Father -

Jesus is able to . . .

- convert slavery to service
- Replace Chaos with calm
- Pain into purpose.

Jesus is able to . . . MOVE ON IN FAITH.

St. Paul, in today's second reading speaks of how knowing his purpose in life – sustains him . . .

“Although I am free . . .
I have made myself a slave to all . . .
All this I do for the sake of the Gospel, so that I
too may have a share in it.”

It is hard to imagine a human being who does not want to be happy, free and fulfilled.

One of the great truths and mysteries however is that genuine happiness, freedom, and personal fulfillment,
- seem inevitably to come to people
whose life is given over to a “nobler cause”.

For Job – thoroughly enmeshed in his own losses and sufferings – **life is hopelessness and drudgery.**

Jesus and Paul on the other hand **have looked beyond themselves and discovered** that

Dedicating their lives to a “nobler cause” . . . and Caring for others so that they may hear, and experience the good news . . .

- Transforms Chaos to personal calm . . .
- even in the midst of life's storms
- Transforms Work, which some might see as drudgery and slavery – to fulfilling service.
- Transforms suffering that could be experienced only as pain – to redeeming purpose.

Conclusion:

It appears that “Attitude - Really IS Everything.”

And a positive attitude toward life and service can be achieved only . . . through conversation with the One who has made each of us for some specific purpose – outside of ourselves.

Two years ago at a Lenten Retreat, Trish LaFortune who at the time had just completed a very difficult course of chemotherapy for a mysterious cancer that had threatened her life . . . spoke these words of hope.

“The Christian Life dictates that with every cross

- *there is a stone waiting to be rolled away,*
- *a tomb waiting to be walked out of . . .*
- *with every tragedy, there is a resurrection waiting to happen.*

*While we serve at the tomb of another,
we walk out of our own.”*

And so this week find a quiet time to consider . . .

1. When surrounded by Chaos,
can I seek a place of calm?
2. When I feel like a slave,
can I choose to become a servant?
3. When engulfed by the pain of living,
Can I find the purpose of my life
and like Jesus . . . MOVE ON IN FAITH?