

Crisis, Healing and Gratitude

Intro. This year it might be easier identify with Job than ever before [M. McGlone, *NCR*, January, 2021]. He is most often made a shining example to us as a patient, loving follower of God. Saying about someone, “She has the patience of Job,” is usually a complement. A close reading of the book of Job reveals it was not always true. Like us during this past year, Job faced loss and complained bitterly about it to God. Throughout most of this Old Testament book, he struggled with his anger against God. Job would understand how many of us are feeling.

I. He had everything a man could want in his life: thousands of sheep and camels; servants and land; wife and ten sons and daughters. Suddenly it all disappeared, destroyed, stolen. His whole life was turned upside down. He didn’t understand. He was faithful to God. God is supposed to reward the good

and punish the wicked. His friends insisted there must be some evil present in him or his family. They urged him to be patient. He would not. In today’s passage he saw life as a drudgery, as pointless. Some of us have wondered the same thing when we are facing incredible pain or loss. What slowly changed for him was realizing he had expected the good things as his right when they were really a gift from God. When my dad died suddenly, it ruined all *my* plans; I didn’t think about *his*! A few months later finding a sense of gratitude to God, my outlook on life started to get better. In the gospel, Andrew and Simon’s mother-in-law was pretty sick and struggling with not being able to care for her family properly. Then her son-in-law brought a stranger home for dinner.

Concl. Peter’s mother-in-law, restored to health turned to service of others. The Greek word is diakoneo; the source of our word, deacon, meaning

to serve. [By the way, pray for our first ever deacon-to-be, Rich Hay.] I used to think it was about her work as a woman to cook for the men. Now I understand what she did was a response of gratitude to the healing she experienced at the hand of the Lord. Job too recovered, rebuilt his life because he was able to recognize everything he had was a *gift from God*. His journey back to life was long and difficult, but he persevered and decided to live it differently than before. And in spite of his experiences, live it in a relationship of thankfulness with God. If we read all forty-two chapters of the book of Job, there is still no clear or logical explanation for suffering, not even for those who believe in God. At the conclusion of the book is a man with a profound a sense of gratitude. Because of the virus *we* complain we can't enjoy the freedom we believe is our right, while many people have lost jobs; and worst of all, lost family and friends to the

COVID virus or complications. Others are struggling even after surviving it; some of our priests and our parish staff. The people who lived through the Great Depression of 1929, wars, the Holocaust or other awful disasters always carry the pain, but offer us shining examples of faith and a belief in life. We have options. We can rebuild while never losing fully the scars of our past. Vaccinations are giving us hope that life will get better. Let's turn it around.

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