

THE FIFTH SUNDAY in Ordinary Time

By Fr. Greg Ames

Go into any bookstore and you will find numerous books about being happy. Cynics call it an industry of happiness. Among the titles with recipes for a happy life are: *Wholly Joy: Being Happy in an Unhappy World*; *The Lazy Person's Guide to Happiness*; *Eight Steps to Happiness*; *I'd Rather Laugh: How to Be Happy When Life Has Other Plans for You*; *What Happy People Know*; *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. In an essay where he reviewed a few of these books and pondered the meaning of happiness, Richard Corliss writes, *So, is the glass half empty or half full, or as the engineers say, twice as big as it needs to be? Happiness may consist in recognizing that we can't always be happy; that ambitions are worth fighting for, but not dying for; that a sense of humor . . . is necessary for a life saving sense of proportion. Consider this as well: that we can work to attain happiness, but that it can sneak up and surprise us as well.*

Remember that my life is like the wind; I shall not see happiness again.

Happiness is a tricky thing; one person's happiness could be another's misery. Job is the unhappiest person in the Bible. Even if you do not know or understand his story, his complaint in the first reading was loud and clear: I am miserable because all these bad things have happened in my life. His story does not end with "they all lived happily ever after," but with Job's realizing that there is sometimes no good reason for why bad things happen, but God is still near. But it is not Job who interests me this morning; it is the mother-in-law of Simon. She lies in bed with a fever that could have killed her; with Job she should say, I shall not see happiness again. What Jesus did for her; he will do for us as we go through life, sometimes happy, sometimes troubled.

HE APPROACHED HER There is something touching about Jesus making time to approach Simon's mother-in-law. Did the fever make her delirious; did she drift in and out of consciousness; did she know he was there? We are not certain; but we do know he comes to you. Jesus approaches you every day, in every moment; when you are feeling great and when you may be a bit delirious. Some-

times we know it; sometimes we aren't paying attention. But he comes because he wants you to be healed of the things that burden you. Like Jesus, we need to make the time to go to a quiet place so that we can see him.

HE GRASPED HER HAND What an act of connection, commitment and compassion. He grasped her hand. He did not stroke or touch it; he linked himself to her. Paul understood that Jesus had grasped him at well, that is why he is so enthusiastic as he tells the Corinthians that living the Gospel is a passion. When Jesus looks he does not see, as we often do, a faceless crowd, a mass of people. He sees each individual. He sees your joy and your struggle. He grasps you when you are well and joyful, when you are a complaining Job. Where are you today: that is where Jesus wants to be.

HE HELPED HER UP Jesus heals the woman; she who lays at death's door is helped up. And where does she go? Does she take her place among the disciples; does she pack her bags to travel with him? No, she goes right back to the kitchen to serve him and the others. Before anyone groans, don't miss the point of the story. Jesus helps her up, restores her to life so that she can return to life doing the same things, but as a different person. She is helped up to live her daily, routine life as a person of integrity and faith. That is true discipleship. Not extraordinary feats of courage or world changing acts of service. It is about being a different person—a person of faith—as I go about my daily tasks. Those are the things that can change the world.

I don't know where you go when you leave; what you do each day. But in these troubling days when happy news is hard to find, could you go back to you your daily tasks with a commitment to bring peace to your life; a commitment to create unity in your life, not conflict. A commitment to let Christ be seen in the work of your hands. These are the things we can do something about; and you just might be surprised that those are the moments happiness with find you.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Job 7:1-7

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

February 5, 2012

靈 修 生 活

得 救 恩 的 痛 苦

陳 日 君

忽然知道我們的親友患了絕症……有人過了世，還是年輕、留下配偶及幼年的子女……在這些痛苦面前我們找不到安慰的說話。在這情形下恐怕最好還是不要講話，靜靜地陪伴看在痛苦中的兄弟姐妹。正如約伯的朋友們，他們「聽說他遭遇了災禍，就來探望他。本想慰問他、勸勉他，但他們從遠處舉目一望，已認不得他，就放聲大哭，撕破了自己的外衣」，「他們同他在灰土中，坐了七天七夜，因見他受苦太大，沒有人敢向他說一句話」。(約二 11-13)

當別人心煩意亂、傷痛欲絕的時候、講大篇道理，根本是不尊重他的痛苦。我們要像保祿一樣「對軟弱的人、我成爲軟弱」(讀經二)與哭泣的一起哭泣。

那麼這些問題就只用情緒治療來解決嗎？當然不夠。我們在衝擊未來到時，要對痛苦這大問題找個答案。當受苦的朋友平靜下來時、我們也可以和他分享我們對痛苦的了解，幫助他想通這個大問題。

教宗若望保祿二世寫了許多長篇的、重要的通諭。但有一封簡短的牧函，我愛得手不釋卷，那是一九八四年寫的「論得救恩的痛苦」。

教宗說：「天主的愛是一切問題的答案。在耶穌的十字架上，天主給了人、痛苦這問題的答覆」(牧函十三節)。「天主竟這樣愛了世界，甚至賜下了自己的獨生子，使凡信祂的人不至喪亡，反而獲得永生。」(若三 16)

痛苦本是人類罪過的效果。人破壞了造物主所訂的秩序、就自食其果。痛苦當然可以說是罪惡的懲罰。但在這懲罰中也包括天主仁慈的邀請，校正罪人，是否引導他們回頭。「懲罰不僅是用另一個惡來補償背命的客觀邪惡，但首要的正是在受苦人身上製造重建良善的本能性」。

說痛苦是罪的效果並不是說這個人犯罪、就這個人受苦。約伯的朋友錯怪了他。他是無辜的，他一向忠於天主，他在考驗中也堅決地信任主：「我確實知道我的救主活著。」(約十九 25) 門徒問耶穌那胎生的瞎子、是他犯了罪，還是他的父母？耶穌答覆說：「也不是他犯了罪，也不是他的父母，而是爲叫天主的工作在他身上顯現出來。」(若九 1)

耶穌是「痛苦的僕人」，祂藉著因愛而忍受的苦，把我們從罪惡中解救出來，也就是使我的避免喪亡、那永遠的痛苦。這是救恩的主要意義。

那末關於暫世的痛苦呢？耶穌並沒有廢除人生現世的痛苦。可是在一切痛苦中卻發射出新的光明，得救的光明：「天主竟這樣愛了世界，甚至賜下了自己的獨生子。」

瑪爾谷在福音的開始就介紹了耶穌的事跡：「祂醫好了許多患不同病症的人，驅逐了許多魔鬼」。身爲天主子，又取了人性的祂，不能在痛苦的人身邊經過而無動於中。但瑪爾谷也說祂不准魔鬼說話，而且一知道大家都找祂、就決定到別處去宣講。祂不想人們太迷於祂的事跡。祂治病驅魔是愛的表示：天主的愛已顯現人間。但祂的救恩主要不是爲解脫現世的痛苦，而是藉著聖化痛苦保證永生。

讓我們向耶穌學習：藉痛苦磨煉愛心，並關懷在痛苦中的兄弟姐妹。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 二 年 二 月 五 日

約 7:1-7； 格前 9:16-23； 谷 1:29-39