

February 8, 2015 – 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Work: Job, St. Paul and Jesus

Just four weeks ago we celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus and the readings had such an up-beat tone.

"All you who are thirsty, come to the water!"

Those were the words of Isaiah to the Israelites exiled in Babylon.

Hundreds of miles from home the Jews hear a promise of returning to their country, their own lands, the lands of the ancestors.

Such a contrast with our first reading today from the Book of Job.

"Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?

Are not his days those of hirelings?

He is a slave who longs for the shade,

a hireling who waits for his wages.

So I have been assigned months of misery,"

Or as we would say today:

"Our work is a drag; it's boring; I dread going there; we are exploited;

I hate the job; the conditions are lousy; I am overworked; it's

modern day slavery; and they underutilize my talents."

Yes, complaining about work is nothing new!

Fortunately, our Scriptures go on to lift us up and give us a broader vision of our work.

The psalm, Psalm 147, is one of the psalms in the restoration period, the time when the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon to Israel and rebuilt the Temple.

"Praise the Lord who heals the brokenhearted."

Ah, we can rely on the Lord to console us - with or without a job, with or without good working environments.

In our Epistle St. Paul tells the Corinthians about his work life, a rather unique life at that.

In his missionary work St. Paul had the practice of making a living by working as a tent-maker.

He would use that money to pay for his food and lodging.

He did not want people to accuse him of mooching off their generosity.

If you would, he had two jobs:

tent-making and preaching about Jesus.

I don't know how he approached his tent-making but he certainly approached his preaching with gusto!

Now, there was a man who loved his work,

who was driven,

who knew he had a calling,

who called himself a slave because he was there to serve others.

As he put it in today's reading:

"To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.

I have become all things to all, to save at least some."

He was adaptable to the needs of others.

He was compassionate.

He not only preached but he listened so well to the people.

In our Gospel we pick up from last Sunday's Gospel of St. Mark where Jesus was preaching with authority in the synagogue.

As Fr. Don said last week, the people were intrigued and amazed that their old neighbor, the carpenter, the son of Mary, had such a strong message for them ... and could cure the sick.

Well, if St. Paul ministered with such conviction, how would we describe Jesus at work?

The Father had sent him - so he certainly was called, he was compelled!

Jesus was focused.

When the disciples wanted him to come back and cure more people
he said that his purpose was to preach to other villages as well.

He, too, was the servant to the people:

listening to their needs,

healing their ailments,

addressing their needs with parables and wise preaching.

Since he was both *God* and man, he also needed a break from his work.

He got up early in the morning to speak with his Father.

He prayed the standard prayers, the psalms, and then he had a more
personal conversation with the Father.

We could almost imagine those conversations.

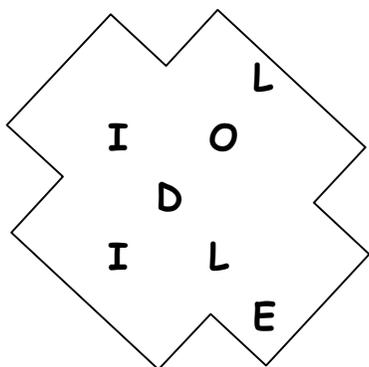
Father, what do the people in this next village need to hear to
help them believe?

Father, where should we head next?

Father, it is so disappointing that with all the miracles and
preaching some people still are not listening, not changing their
ways, not seeing how much we truly love them.

How about **us** ... and **our** work?

To talk in the extremes: work is our **IDOL** & work is being **IDLE**.



Here work can mean volunteer work, housework, paid work, school work.

We can be workaholics who consider our work as our **IDOL**

- busy, busy, busy ... - letting life pass us by ...
- Oh, yes, there is some mandatory OT, urgent need to get that hot project done, a test to study for.
- But busy all the time???

Or, at the other extreme we can simply be **IDLE**.

- Not lifting a finger to help around the house.
- Not helping a sole with any of their work
- Sitting around and just vegetating!

Probably neither of those extremes is truly healthy.

We need some balance in our lives:

We need a healthy approach to the work in our lives.

Some physical exercise to keep us healthy

Some civic or cultural activities to broaden us

Some recreation to give us a breather

Some service efforts to help others

And, just like Jesus, we need prayer.

To help us keep a balance, to keep a perspective on life, to keep in tune with the Lord I strongly recommend the following.

Like Jesus in the Gospel, like St. Paul and even Job, find some time early in the day to have our own little chat with the Father.

It can be at home, in the car, on the bus or when you walk ... just turn off the radio so you can concentrate.

We say those familiar words:

"Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed by thy name.

Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Then we can pause and have that conversation with the Father.

Father, what do **you** want **me** to do today to help bring about your kingdom?

Who needs my help, right now, here today?

Then, kick it around a little in your mind and spirit:

- What could be done?
- What is really the priority?

And then we can pray:

"Give us this day our daily bread."

And here is where we can ask, can beg the Lord for where we really need help this very day - a problem in the family, at work, ...

And then we get through another day!

At the end of the day, we can have another short chat with the Lord about how things went that day.

We can pray about priorities for the next day.

We can again ask the Lord for help to get those priorities done.

That's it: a day's work sandwiched between prayers - just the two of you.

Blessings on your time with Lord each morning and evening!