

EDUCATION SUNDAY 2012

Homily Notes



5th Sunday of Ordinary Time (B)

Job 7.1-3, 6-7

Psalms 147.1-6

1 Corinthians 9.16-19, 22-23,

Mark 1. 29-39

In his grief Job takes a bleak view of our lot. Genesis records how Adam and Eve had been created in God's image, to share in his rule, to co-operate freely in the creation. But now Job sees life as servitude. Sitting among the ashes of his past good fortune, he has come to see the world through the eyes of Israel's pagan neighbours and enemies. It was they who thought the gods made human beings as so many slaves.

Suffering has brought Job to the point of restless despair. At night he frets for the dawn. By day he longs for nightfall. This display of anxiety is more than a fact of psychology; it is a further departure from Genesis, the created order of night and day. For Job, the world is out of synch.

Simon's mother-in-law, on the other hand, is returned to the social world from which the fever had removed her. She moves back into synch. She is raised up from her disabling illness when Christ takes her by the hand to participate in the Sabbath celebrations. Her healing, then, allows her to celebrate anew God's created order. By serving in this way she comes to share in God's rest.

Our readings are perhaps an invitation to take a fresh look at our various labours and at our leisure. To look not so much at what exactly we do, in the workplace or in our free time, but at what it's all for. We can become so absorbed in our various immediate activities as to forget the wider life we were made to enjoy.

What happens when we remember the creation story and its culminating Sabbath rest? It may be a useful brake on our ambitions, the reminder that like every finite creature under heaven, we can only do so much in the time allotted us. There is a call to judge our actions by God's creative measure: is our achievement valuable, sustainable, respectful of the divine image in neighbours and strangers? We are invited to wonder anew at the beautiful, the artful, and

the ingenious. God's astonishing love is discernable even in his absence, giving each thing the space and nature to be itself.

The Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday are shifts in perspective, a coming to see ourselves and our world through God's eyes. In the Jewish Sabbath God sees all that he has made, and sees that it is good. In the Christian Sunday God sees all that was broken, everything that had fallen out of synch, sees all that he makes new and redeems in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Where does that take us? Today's Gospel shows a significant way forward. First we move out from the Sabbath meal within the house. At sunset, the start of a new week, we find what Mark describes as the 'whole city assembled before the door.' For Jesus and his disciples there's an urgent public ministry of healing the sick and exorcising the possessed. Adopting God's perspective leads us out into love of neighbour, the many works of mercy.

But then Jesus goes off alone to pray in solitude to the Father. Love of neighbour returns us to a love of God exercised in heartfelt prayer. We cannot genuinely practise the one love without the other.

Our prayer, springing from and expressing our love of God, spills over into and compels our social action in the world, including our provision of Catholic Education in the service of the Common Good.

The challenge, we shall discover as Mark's Gospel unfolds, is to share precisely in Christ's most intimate prayer and in his public ministry (for example in health, education and social action). Both prayer and public ministry have as their perfect expression his cross, death, and resurrection.

The Sabbath meal in the house of Peter at Capernaum is an image of our Eucharist, in which we join ourselves to Christ in his self-offering, praying in the unity of the Holy Spirit through, with, and in the Son to the glory of God the Father. In his grace we then go out as his fellow-workers in the new creation.

Today, on this Education Sunday we pray for and give thanks for the Lord's fellow workers in the field of Catholic Education. We recognise that our schools and colleges are not merely places of secular learning: they share in the divine mission of helping all to arrive at the fullness of Christian life and are one of the principal ways in which the Church places herself at the service of society.