

Divine Mercy Parish – Triduum Mass
Wed. Oct. 3, 2012

Job 9:1-12, 14-16
Luke 9: 57-62

As the homilist for the Triduum Masses, I am here not only as a preacher, but also as a weaver. That is an image I invite you to keep in your heart as we learn new spiritual lessons about our dialogue with God through the dialogues the people in the scripture stories had with God.

One theme that will be woven into all the homilies for this Triduum of Masses that concludes with the feast of St. Faustina on Friday is the theme of Dialogue. It is not just any ordinary dialogue between two people, but a sacred dialogue with humans in conversation with God and God in conversation with humans. Let's see how that unfolds in the first reading.

About 2500 years ago, a man lived whose name has enriched the minds and lives of human beings ever since. He was a sensitive man who saw good people sick and dying around him while proud and selfish people prospered. He heard all the learned, clever, and pious attempts to explain life, and he was as dissatisfied with them as we are today. Because he was a person of rare literacy and intellectual gifts, he wrote a long philosophical poem on the subject of why God lets bad things happen to good people. It appears in the Bible as the Book of Job.

As the story goes, Satan appears before God to tell Him about all the sinful things people were doing on earth. God says to Satan, "Did you notice my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him, a thoroughly good man who never sins."

Satan answers God, "Of course Job is pious and obedient. You make it worth his while, showering riches and blessings on him. Take them away and see how long he remains your obedient servant."

This is one of the few passages in scripture where God has a conversation with Satan. It happens to us far more often especially when we empower evil voices in our heart to trick us into doing or saying things that leave us tasting the bitter fruit of regret, shame and guilt.

But God has no regrets accepting Satan's challenge. Without in any way telling Job what is going on, God destroys Job's house and cattle and kills his children. He afflicts Job with boils all over his body, so that he endures physical torture. Job's wife urges him to curse God, even if it means God's striking him dead.

Three friends come to console Job. In their conversations they urge him to give up his piety, if this is the reward it brings him. But Job remains steadfast in his faith. Nothing that happens to him can make him give up his devotion to God. Job will not be ruled by

the lesser god of despair that leaves him feeling anger and rejection. At the end, God appears, scolds his friends for their advice and rewards Job for his faithfulness; a new home, a new fortune, new children.

Today's first Scripture reading, takes up again the dialogue between Job and his friends. They insist that Job is the subject of divine anger. As today's passage begins, Job wonders how a mere human like himself can approach an all-powerful God and ask him for fairer treatment. Job then gives examples of God's power over the forces of nature. The divine cosmic activity is beyond man's understanding; it is simply a mystery. Rather than trying to explain the mysteries of his tragedies, Job wonders where God is hidden in them. He is looking for the meaning of the divine interventions in his life. From his words, you will perhaps share Job's own sense of helplessness before an all-powerful God. All he can do is stand before that God in total wonder.

Perhaps a modern day story will help to shed light on Job's contemplative attitude. Elie Weisel is a survivor of the Holocaust and a Nobel Peace prize winner. In his book, *Night* he shares a story about three inmates attempting to escape and the Commandant's decision to hang them as a deterrent. Two of the inmates were adults and died quickly. The third was a child. He was left swinging on the gallows between life and death. The entire camp was ordered to: "*Bare your heads,*" and process in a circle around the gallows. When Elie Weisel looked at the young boy in the face he saw that his eyes were glazed and he struggled for every breath. Someone walking behind him said, "*Where is our God now?*" Elie Weisel remembers a voice telling him inside, "*God is hanging on those gallows.*" It is a great story about finding God hidden in our tragedies.

In the Gospel, Jesus warns that he expects his followers to give themselves to him totally. He is speaking about the demands of discipleship.

The line "*foxes have holes*" implies that Jesus does not trick anyone into following him. But he does call for total dedication. "*Let the dead bury their dead*" is a play on words. It means let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead; Jesus has a message of life. Filial relationships, especially in burying one's parents is deep in Judaism. Jesus intended to stir thought, to stretch the imaginations of the crowd by teaching that ploughing for the kingdom entails sacrifice, one cannot look back lest the work suffer.

The themes of dialogue with God and total discipleship are woven into the life of St. Faustina.

Her diaries, which contained a record of her conversations and messages from Jesus, gave no indication that she felt cursed by God because she was poor and uneducated. On the contrary, like Job, Faustina was interiorly free of feeling abandoned, thus empowering her to reveal in her humble life and service the true meaning of her name, "*fortunate or blessed one.*"

The trust she leaned on at age 19, to leave home and travel to a foreign city by train to honor the call of Jesus to join a convent, is the kind of trust Jesus was implying in the gospel about discipleship. In her dialogues she had developed a spiritual relationship with the divine Master that enabled her to plough the inner field of a call to religious life by looking forward and not looking back.

Job and Jesus and Faustina invite us today to develop the kind of contemplative attitude toward life that nurtures in us a “noticing” an “attending” to our tragedies & losses, our curses and our blessings, our looking forward & our looking back as the interior places where God wants to dialogue with us about faithfulness, humbleness and discipleship.