

# FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 5, 2006

Job 7:1-4, 6-7 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23 Mk 1:29-39

Homily by: *Catherine Marie Bazar, OP*

When Father Bernie O'Connor is able to offer Eucharist in jail, he always reminds my women that drugs, prostitution, robbery, forgery, and murder are not the worst sins. The worst sin we can possibly commit is discouragement and despair because we are telling God that what we have done is greater than God's ability to forgive and heal. It is then that we condemn ourselves to hopeless misery.

Today we are journeying with three people who experienced their own share of discouragement and possibly despair in their personal struggles. We see that all three men were stripped of those energy centers we rely upon for our identity and happiness. Job lost his programs for security and survival in the removal of all his earthly possessions. Paul experienced the loss of his programs for esteem and approval, and endured ridicule, scorn, and even eventual imprisonment by preaching the Gospel message. Peter felt his own helplessness in the face of the ultimate experience of death as his programs for power and control over this dilemma failed him.

Father Bernie then relates the tale of two frogs who fell into a bucket of cream. Desperately, they thrashed and kicked and saw no way out. After awhile, one gave up and sank to the bottom. Finito! One dead frog! The other, seeing no hope, still kicked and thrashed until the cream rose in a mound of butter, allowing him to step out. There is always a solution. The secret is in never giving up.

Perhaps our experiences of life may not hold such high drama as these three giants in Scripture had. Nevertheless, the journey into the inner recesses of the soul call all of us to undergo the same refinement of our three energy centers of power, prestige, and possessions. Each time we experience a victory (and God so graciously lets us believe we achieved it ourselves), we find cause to rejoice just as our three companions today eventually did.

In time, Job says, "I spoke of things I did not understand, too wonderful for me to know. My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:2-3). Paul tells us to "be steadfast. . . Improve constantly in the work of the Lord, knowing that with him your labor is not without fruit" (1Cor 15: 58). Finally, Peter reminds us to "strive with the greatest determination and increase your faith with strength" (2Pt 1:5).

It is not so much the intensity or scope of their struggles that endears Job, Paul, and Peter to us but rather their complete trust in God and their determination to make visible that trust in the face of the impossible.

Whatever challenging journey we are on – whether physical, emotional, or spiritual – let us keep up the kicking and the thrashing when we don't see the way out, knowing that there is always strength for:

- one more kind word to speak;
- one more helping step to take;
- one more gentle hand to shake;
- one more listening ear to hear;
- one more encouraging smile to render;
- one more compassionate glance to assure;
- one more happy hug to give;
- one more welcoming kiss to implant.

And why? "All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it" (1Cor 9:23). Who knows? That final act may be the mound of butter that sets us free!