

Sunday.5

Today's first reading from Job and the Gospel from Mark 1 are studies in contrast. Job here laments having been born. Life is a drudgery, he tells us. He cannot sleep at night, and his days end in hopelessness. He will not see happiness again. But in our Gospel we see Jesus going from success to success. He is speaking with authority and casting our evil spirits. He is touring the Galilean country side with great success. It is clear, then, which reading is more attractive for us, even though we have to admit that Job is right. Life is often a drudgery. Our nights can be long, and our days without hope.

We could also say that the reading from Job seems to be more in tune with what is going on today. The economy has ground to a halt. I am not an economist, but I have read that one of the underlying causes for today's situation is fear. People are afraid to spend the money they still have lest they end up with nothing at all. So there is less and less buying and selling, and the economic wheels of the world gradually slow to a halt. Thus the solution to this situation is the removal of this fear. But how to do that? That is what the politicians and economists must figure out.

It is interesting that the solution to our economic crisis, the removal of fear, is also the solution to a religious crisis. We see that so often in the Gospels. Last Tuesday, for example, we read from ch. 5 of Mark's Gospel the story of two intertwined miracles. You remember them. A synagogue official named Jairus asks Jesus to come to his house to cure his twelve year old daughter who is very sick. But while Jesus is on his way to Jairus' house, a woman in the crowd around him who has suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years says to herself: "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." She does and she is immediately cured. You see: there is no fear in her. She has confidence in Jesus' power to cure her. Jesus himself says that to her: "Daughter, your faith has saved you."

Now Jesus continues on his way to Jairus' house. But people arrive from there to tell Jairus and Jesus that the girl has already died. Therefore, there is no reason for Jesus to come. But Jesus says to Jairus: "Do not be afraid. Just have faith." And Jairus does. Jesus and he go to his house. Jesus takes the child's hand and says to her, "Talitha koum," which means: "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And she does.

Did you notice the part touch played in both these miracles? The woman touches the Lord's clothes; the Lord himself takes the little girl's hands. For the woman touching Jesus is an expression of her faith in his power to heal her. Perhaps we could say the same of Jesus. His taking the little girl's hand is a sign of his faith in his own power to heal. Therefore, we can say that we touch Jesus by our faith. Our believing in his power to heal us is our touching him, our reaching out to touch him.

We must not be afraid to reach out to touch the Lord, which is to say, we must not be afraid to believe in him and his power to heal us. Let us repeat to ourselves the words Jesus spoke to Jairus: "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." And maybe our faith may then express itself in other areas of our lives and help remove the fear which is paralyzing our economy.