Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 7:1-4,6-7

Psalm 147

1 Corinthians 9:16-19,22-23

Mark 1: 29-39

Jesus heals the mother-in-law of Peter. Gracious gesture, I’m sure. I’m not so sure that Peter appreciates having a revived mother-in–law again. Be that as it may, Jesus gives an example to all of his disciples, including us. It is the example of healing others.

Some of us are in the healing profession. Some of us are first responders. Some of us as parishioners have taken CPR classes. Some of us are self-medicating (which isn’t such a good idea.) Some of us have patched up wounds with Band-Aids. Some of us have offered honey and tea. All of us have used Vick’s Vapo-Rub. Somehow, some way, we all have been involved with healing. As Christians we all come face-to-face with people who are hurting and in need of healing.

As disciples of Christ, we need to help heal others as a spiritual exercise. How do we go about doing that?

Jesus was curing people left and right. He announces that he is special (that is sent by God) to announce that God as Father wants all his children to be well. Jesus needed to be in contact with his Father to prepare himself to do what needed to be done. The Gospel of Mark says, “Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.” That is the key to healing service – prayer.

I don’t necessarily agree with the rising before dawn stuff, but I understand the need for prayer. It is a necessary thing to do if one wants to be a healer in the name of Jesus Christ. Most of us in the crisis of the moment cry out “God what am I gonna do now?” That’s a good thing. Better is to pray ahead of time, “Lord, if I am needed to be a sacrament of healing, give me your help. Amen.”

Now whom are we to heal? Who are those who are hurting that come into our lives and what can we do for them in the name of Jesus Christ? First our attitude must be Christ’s. As we have heard in our second reading, “To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.” We bring the Lord to the sick person by not lording over them. We sympathize to begin with, but then we empathize in the name of Jesus Christ. We do more than take pity. We identify with them.

The sick are hurt but they are also hurting. We try to heal them as the Lord would heal them. Our psalm says, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

Take Job for instance from our first reading. How would you try and heal him? You can’t give him back his family or his possessions. What you cannot do is lord yourself over him like his friends did. They say it was all Job’s fault. Then they walked away. The Jesus thing to do is to sit down beside him and hear him out. Some friends would say, “Snap out of it and get with the program. Cut your losses and begin your life again.” That would probably throw Job off the cliff. The Christian friend would not dismiss Job as a weakling. The friend would become as weak as Job as to win him over. Not only has life crippled Job, it has left him brokenhearted. The Christian friend would notice this and zero in on it. The balm for healing is to just be with him and listen. Not give him advice. Not tell him what to do. Not try to cheer him up. Just listen and in the back of your mind ask Jesus to be with both of you. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. The hurting person sees Jesus in you because by your Christian presence, Jesus is present too.

“Praise the Lord who heals the brokenhearted”