

Human Suffering and Christian Living: Jesus is the Answer!

Life is a mystery. The deeper we reflect to answer the questions about life, the more questions life poses to us. One striking question about life people have tried to answer is the question about human suffering. Human suffering as part of life is mysterious. We know and feel it, but we cannot answer fully the questions about it. The sources of these sufferings can be nature (earthquake, hurricane, vocational demands-like St. Paul in the 2nd reading, old age, illness, et al), caused by others to us (assaults, intimidation, wickedness et al), and self-inflicted (careless life, selfishness, impatience, lack of contentment, anxieties, fears et al).

In the biblical story of Job we see all kinds of sufferings that beset us in our lives, like the sufferings of bereavement, material loss, and abandonment; emotional and physical pains (illness). Job in his sufferings felt the pains of his life and described the nature of his sorrows. Part of it we read today in the first reading. These words of Job are similar to words we utter in the face of tragedies that constitute the sufferings of our lives. Though Job lost everything and felt the sorrow of it, but he did not lose his faith in God. He was able to proclaim: "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19: 25).

Human suffering is a reality before us. It comes even when we do everything to avoid it. The way we respond to it makes a great difference in our lives. Our Gospel today tells us how Jesus alleviated the sufferings of his people. Jesus, the self-manifestation of God, remains the answer to all the questions human sufferings pose to us. He came, suffered and identified his sufferings with his cross. This cross was never easy for him (Luke 22:42), just as it will never be easy for us. He calls us to identify our suffering with his, and to see it as the cross of our lives, which he invites us as his true disciples to carry and follow him always (Luke 14:27). Let us pray for the grace not to feel that our own cross is too much for us to carry, but to call on God the source of all strength to help us as Jesus did, for nothing is impossible to God. (Luke 1: 37). Amen.