

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B

Is 50:5-9a

Ps 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

Jas 2:14-18

Mk 8:27-35

Michael P. Sullivan, O.S.A.

Is there anyone here today who likes to suffer? If so, would you please raise your hand? See the pastor after Mass and he will, I am sure, be able to refer you to a good psychiatrist.

No one likes to suffer, and yet suffering is a part of all of our lives. Suffering comes to us from many different sources: children, spouses, parents, employment, and friends, to name just a few. Some of our suffering is physical, some is emotional, and some is soul-shattering. Bad things happen to good people

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples that he, too, must suffer much and be rejected and even be put to death. Peter wanted to spare his Lord such pain. "You are thinking not as God does but as human beings do," Jesus tells Peter. What is the Lord trying to teach us? If we have a strong enough faith, then even pain and suffering need not be wasted, but can, if embraced, even be meritorious. Jesus could not have been raised from the dead had he not embraced the Cross. Yet even he asks if his Father had forsaken him. We question God's plan and why there is so much suffering in the world, too. Some days we may even doubt if we can go on.

Jesus gives us the only answer that makes going on possible. The answer is faith. Yes, a faith that allows us to believe that out of the pain and suffering comes redemption and resurrection. That is not to say we are to roll over and play dead. No! We are to use our intelligence and try to make a bad situation better. But when tragedy strikes and all our efforts to make things otherwise fail, all we have is faith. Each one of us was called into creation by a loving God who wants for us only total happiness in this life and the next. I truly believe that it is not so important what happens to us in life as how we *respond* to what happens to us.

At this Eucharist today let us make our own the prayer of the father of the possessed boy in the Gospel of Mark: "I do believe, help my unbelief!"