

Points to Help Homily Preparation from a JPIC Perspective

Readings of the 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time - Sunday, February 8, 2009

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

I Cor 9:16-19, 22-23

Mk 1:29-39

- The first reading from Job addresses the reality of suffering, which is often accompanied by human restlessness, fear and hopelessness. Given the deepening economic crisis, the sharp increase in unemployment, and the heightened sense of insecurity that many people feel about the future, a preacher may want to consider exploring and naming these fears and anxieties. The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* says: *"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men (and women) of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Jesus."* The fears and anxieties of the people in our churches do not happen in a vacuum; rather, they occur and are heavily influenced by larger political, social, and economic contexts. These contexts are also within the sphere of God's grace and judgment. As the followers of Jesus, we are called to be actively engaged in influencing our culture and political process. One way to do this is by promoting participation in the Franciscan Action Network: <http://www.franciscanaction.org>
- A possible hook that can grab people's attention and lead into a reflection on the passage from Job is the recent movie "Slumdog Millionaire," which has been nominated for multiple Oscars. The movie is full of potent images of global poverty and suffering in India and elsewhere. However, in the midst of it, there also are themes of redemption, hope and even humor woven into the movie.
- Today's passage from Job, with its bleak assessment of a human condition, appears to be void of any Good News. However, today's Gospel illustrates that Jesus has the ultimate redeeming power. There are several references to Jesus driving out demons – the forces larger than life that wreak havoc on people and entire communities. Just a few examples: the demon of greed – the Wall Street executives giving themselves over \$18 billion in bonuses as millions of people are losing their jobs. There is also the demon of the unjust economic order that leaves behind 2 billion people struggling to survive on less than \$2 a day. Perhaps we could consider the ecological destruction that puts into question human survival on this planet as representing forces larger than life; it's not only the problem with our patterns of consumption, or with public policy – it goes deeper than that. This might be a good example of demonic forces. But the main point is not to explain that, but rather to communicate that Jesus Christ – and we as the Church – have the power to expel all kind of contemporary demons.

*Fr. Jacek Orzechowski, OFM
Co-chair of Holy Name's JPIC Directorate*