

# CATHOLIC DISTANCE UNIVERSITY

## Homily for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday, February 5, 2012

By Fr. Bevil Bramwell, OMI

Job 7:1-4, 6, 7

Psalm 147:1-6

I Corinthians 9:16-19, 22, 23

Mark 1:29-39

Today we learn about the meaning of life. This is the real understanding of the meaning of life as shown to us by God's revelation not the meaning of life from some human philosopher like Karl Marx or Henry Thoreau. As Pope Benedict explains: "The word of God sheds light on human existence and stirs our conscience to take a deeper look at our lives, inasmuch as all human history stands under God's judgment: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations" (Mt 25:31-32)." (Verbum Domini 99) So we are hearing about the meaning of life from God himself. Not as an exercise in information gathering but rather so that we can see the path that we are on. Christianity offers something unique because it not only offers an idea but the Spirit of God to achieve it.

The *First Reading* is taken from the Book of Job. Job is commenting on the kinds of things that we do. For all of our supposed progress we are still the same human beings with the same problems. For example: "Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?" Or just as poignantly: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." No wonder we try to fill our days with work or sex and drugs and rock and roll. No wonder the word 'fun' is so much part of our culture. We are afraid of the future and what it will bring. God is the answer to that fear.

The answer begins in the *Responsorial Psalm* when we announce that as the Church community we know that we should: "Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted." There is the only answer to all of our concerns, certainly to all of the concerns that Job raised in his words above. We start off stating our conviction that God is good and gracious. Then we note something else about God: "He tells the number of the stars; he calls each by name." We are not dealing with a wooden statue. God is a power far beyond anything that we can imagine. So unlike all the promises of happiness that we hear around us, God can actually deliver. As we sing: "Great is our Lord and mighty in power; to his wisdom there is no limit," we proclaim our conviction in the sheer power of God. But there is a twist. God is a moral God. We sing: "The LORD sustains the lowly; the wicked he casts to the ground." We are saying that the right attitude before this God is one of humility and obedience.

This is Good News. It is Gospel. As we hear in the *Second Reading*, in which Paul, speaking after the coming of Jesus Christ, says that he has to tell everyone about this Good News, which is really telling us who God is, something that we learned from Jesus Christ. He passes on this Gospel: “All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.”

Now we have been prepared for the *Gospel* and that is about Jesus himself preaching the Good News. At the same time he is healing people and driving out demons. This is the effect of the Good News about who God is—something that we learned in the Psalm. Job did not have the answers to his questions—at least the ones he poses in today’s reading—but here in the life of Jesus we see people getting the answers and overcoming their problems through the power of Jesus Christ. The little piece of Mark’s Gospel that we read concludes with an amazing image: “So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.” Here is the power of God cleaning out the neighborhood of all of its evil. Remember the line in the Psalm about the wicked? Well, here is a neighborhood being made good and whole again. God does this right here in this world. Let us be thankful!