

**FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (2/7-8/2009)**

*Job 7/1-7, Psalm 147, 1 Corinthians 9/16-23, Mark 1/29-39*

Permit me to share a very personal experience with you.

A while back, I rather unexpectedly had to come to grips with my own mortality.

Shortly after a regularly scheduled stress test, I was informed by the doctors that there was the almost certain likelihood of some blockage in three arteries leading to my heart.

A triple by-pass was the proposed solution, and so off we went.

Fortunately, as of this writing, all has gone well, and it won't be long, I hope, until I will be back in the saddle again. The good doctors are mightily pleased, as am I.

I had plenty of time to think about healing during the past few weeks.

Today's Gospel passage shows Jesus at his most compassionate, offering healing and understanding to those whom he encounters.

First to Peter's mother-in-law, then to a host of visitors after the family supper.

I ask myself what part Jesus and my faith in him contributed to my survival and recovery.

I prayed a lot, and many prayers to the healing Lord were offered for me; I was anointed and received the Eucharist daily.

All of that played a significant part, of that I am certain.

But there was an additional factor that, in no small measure, aided my recovery.

I speak about the personnel in the cardiac ICU and Telemetry sections of St. Joseph's hospital.

While I was in Intensive Care for two days, I received the most gentle and complete care you can imagine from the full medical staff.

Throughout that time, one nurse was assigned to my care, to be on for my every need.

And the care those individuals offered!

They were constantly on the watch to help, oftentimes before I even knew I needed help.

Talk about healing hands; talk about people imitating Jesus!

And not only were they intent on my personal recovery, those individual nurses and attendants were so cooperative and caring with all the hospital staff.

They were quick to offer help to one another when crises arose at other stations; they responded with immediate generosity when the cry for help went out.

It was as wonderful an example of what our Christian lives should be about as I have ever witnessed.

My short stay in the Telemetry area was equally impressive though, necessarily, not quite as "intensive".

Now, granted I was in the hands of professional health-care givers who are expected to provide that kind of care, and granted the costs will be astronomical, nevertheless I was touched in countless "over-and-above-the-call-of-duty" ways by these people; I am truly grateful.

They epitomized the spirit of healing that Jesus exhibits in today's Gospel.

Unlike Job's complaint, I do not see my life as a drudgery; I have not been assigned months of misery; and I surely don't agree with the poor guy that "*I shall not see happiness again.*"

I have had help, lots of help; I have had God's grace, and I have had very human healing as well.

Isn't that combination precisely what we all need as we move through life?