

## 5otb

### *Permitted and Summoned to Hope*

Is there real hope for human beings and the creation? Is there hope for those who are suffering from oppression, illness and hardships of every kind? Or, should we adopt the attitude captured in the book of Job? Is there something or someone who can give us an answer? In the light of Job can we promote and embrace hope, or is it prudent to despair in this life? Is there real meaning in life or is all nothingness? Is there someone who can show us that God cares and that death is not the end, especially when times get tough?

The social theorist Max Horkheimer put it this way:

*Why should I not be permitted to hope? Why should I not be permitted to hope in concrete terms, that the murderers do not triumph over their innocent victims, that sweat blood and tears of the millennia, were not in vain, that definitive happiness may eventually be possible for all human beings and especially the despised and the downtrodden? And on the other hand, why should I not be allowed to reject the suggestion that we must be content with rare moments of happiness and to come to terms with normal unhappiness?*

These are questions that remind us that the reason we suffer is because we, as human beings, know deep down that we are called to joy. Without this contrast we could not know suffering—that is, that something and some times are just not right! There is an interior rebellion against the experience of suffering and the counsels of despair that reside deep in the human race.

In Mark's gospel Jesus begins his public ministry with a burst of healing activity and exorcisms. In both of these types of actions we see Jesus restoring people to themselves—to full integrity. For the sick he restores their health so that they can be free to respond to God and life in a new way. For the possessed, he returns them to themselves so that they are no longer victims of forces beyond their control. We see that the Lord comes into our lives to free us from the power of our illness, to release us from seeing ourselves as victims and to experience the freedom to chose, not always our circumstances, but how we will respond to those circumstances! Now, in the power of Christ we are called to help others to be freed from the compulsions and forces that rob them of their freedom to live as whole human beings. We are called to cast out the demonic forces that distort and repress human freedom, whether they are embodied in social structures, habits of mind, or regimes that do evil. This is the work of Christ embodied in the Church.

In the power of Christ the Church, his Body in the world, proclaims the Gospel in words and actions that challenge the encroaching nothingness many may feel from the burdens of life. Wherever a person suffers, a people suffers in any form, the Church brings a message of hope that declares that suffering and death are not the ultimate states of life—rather, resurrection is our future. In this the Church engages in healing in its hospitals, its social outreach to the poor, and its challenge to the tyrants who terrorize and

exploit others. The Church announces that it is possible to reconstruct our world not as one based on deterrence but based on a just and humane rule of law.

This is the power it has received by the Lord in his present being with us in the Holy Spirit and his coming with the fullness of the Reign of God. Today many have or will lose their jobs. How can we reach out and offer some hope? At St. James we are looking into setting up a “Re-Employment Network” to help support and to provide opportunities for those unemployed to find a supportive community and one committed to help facilitate finding a new job. Why should we not be permitted to believe that definitive happiness is possible for all people? Why should we not be a people of hope?