

**Homily – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Towers on Park Lane – February 4, 2024**

In our first reading, Job characterizes the tediousness of life. Despite all the technical progress of humanity, our most immediate experience is that life expires. This brings the worth and meaning of life into perspective. However, the shortness of our earthly life should not depress us. Acknowledging our limits is simply confirming reality, and at the same time embracing the truth that frees us.

We tend to distance ourselves from what is real. This blurring is followed by concrete consequences, mistakes, and frustration. That is why Job states reality as the first step to overcoming hopelessness. Growing in awareness of our limits also helps us appreciate our potential, making us responsible and humble. That is precisely our toughest task, leading us to face what we are called to become.

Feeling welcome by our Heavenly Father into his caring arms is a wonderful opportunity. The experience of feeling loved by God leads us from discipleship to missionary witness. Gratitude springs uncontrollably from the experience of God's goodness poured into our hearts. Our proclamation of the love of God is an inherent demand of the mercy given to us as a gift. The joy of Christ living in our hearts impels us to announce that it is worth trusting in the love that dwells in us.

Missionary discipleship is born from an internal impulse, rather than from social status, arrogant self-confidence, self-righteousness, or presumed intellectual superiority. The authority of a Christian witness is based on the awareness of being among God's dear children. Our authority is the joy of the fullness that grows from within, in the communion of God's People.

In the time of Jesus, Galilee was on the outskirts of Israel. After the initial resistance to his message, Jesus leaves the synagogues and redirects his mission towards the frontiers of God's chosen people. Jesus goes from the center to the outskirts. At the same time, he distances himself from the margins of a shallow faith to dive into the heart of his message. Readiness for the mission is proportional to the intensity of prayer and the depth of heart of the people who worship. Christians are not a social club who gather on Sundays to receive nice-sounding catch phrases. We are a pilgrim people who knows we are saved. We are led from within God's intimate life into the heart of society, to make of all people our loved neighbors.

We may measure the quality of our prayer by reflecting on our ability to appreciate the novelty of life in the present moment. It is impossible to expose oneself to grace and not be born again. For that reason, Pope Francis reminds us: *“Christians are not made for boredom; if anything, for patience. We know that hidden in the monotony of certain identical days is a mystery of grace. There are people who with the perseverance of their love become as wells that irrigate the desert. Nothing happens in vain; and no situation in which a Christian finds him or herself is completely resistant to love. No night is so long as to make us forget the joy of the sunrise. And the darker the night, the closer the dawn. If we remain united with Jesus, the cold of difficult moments does not paralyze us; and if even the whole world preached against hope, if it said that the future would bring only dark clouds, a Christian knows that in that same future there will be Christ's return.”*

May Our Lady of Guadalupe fill our hearts with joyful hope.