



# Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

## GOD AND HUMAN SUFFERING

### PART I

“Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I go back again. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; *blessed be the name of the Lord.*”

“In all this Job did not sin” (Job 1.21-22)

“*Sit Nomen Domini benedictus*” (“blessed be the name of the Lord”)

**J**ob lost everything.

*Everything:* Children. House. Health. Good name. Property ... You name it, Job lost it. Covered with boils “**from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.**” he sat upon the ashes he poured over his head and scraped himself with a potsherd. Even his wife reviled him: “**Curse God and die.**” Three friends came, barely recognizing Job, and sat a week with him in silence. They then proceeded to console Job by convicting him of his sins.

Finally, Job himself uttered what we all have uttered at one time or another in our lives:

“**Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?**”

He would rather that his nakedness had *never been* clothed in honor, good fortune, and prosperity, for then he would not know the pain of *losing* what he had. God had “**put a hedge about him and his house and all that he had, on every side.**”

The evil one knew this, tore down the hedge, devastated the house, and tempted Job to despair ... to give up on God.

And, yet ... “in all this, Job did not sin.” Job was blameless before God.

We *know* Job.

## **We have been Job in one form or another**

We have been devastated, deprived, lost our health, our jobs, our dignity, security, esteem ... even our families.

How do we console ourselves? As Job’s friends consoled him? By telling ourselves that it is, in a sense, *just* ... that the *justice* we had somehow managed to escape until now had finally caught up with us?

Job’s misfortunes were not *just*.

They were not God’s “payback.”

Even were justice demanded of us for our sins — and unlike Job, they are many — it has already been rendered in the ignominy heaped upon Christ on the Cross.

Yes, God is just! But it was *God Himself* who paid the price of justice in the shattered

humanity of Christ. He did not — and He does not — *exact* it from us. We are far too poor to pay.

***God Himself rendered justice to God!***

## **So, what of Job? What of us?**

You came into this world with nothing. You will leave it with nothing. You think you have worked for, *earned*, all the good things you enjoy, and reckon the day that it will be taken from you, an injustice. But injustice was never done to you, for you *never* earned them, never deserved them. What, then, of all your hard work and sweat?

Have you worked harder, more diligently, more desperately, than the poverty-stricken farmer in Africa? Why is he not adorned as you? Why is his plate empty?

If you possess power, wealth, esteem, glory, in this world, do not congratulate yourself on your diligence, your “uncanny” insight, your “good luck, and what you deem your “appropriately rewarded” success through your own magnificent efforts.

*It is more appropriate to tremble.*

## **Behold Job**

And also behold Christ, Christ Who was *also* tempted by that same evil one who, in his empty promise, is frightfully revealing:

“And the devil took Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to Him, ‘To thee will I give all this power, and the glory of them; for to me they are delivered, and to whom I will, I give them.’” (St. Luke 4.5-6)

Ask yourself soberly: whence your prosperity, your power, your wealth? Do you think it your *due*, yours *in justice*? From whom and to what end have you acquired it? And over the dignity of how many people did you accumulate it?

*Job* he tempted to despair in having lost all that was *not his to begin with*.

*Christ* he tempted to idolatry by emptily promising to give Him ... what *was already*

*His!*

*Who* said that wealth, prosperity, power, was *his* to give? And *who was it* that took it away from Job — telling Christ Himself that it was *his* to give and *his* to take?

**Misfortunes are not from God.** Nor are they the penalty for your sins (for you would have *nothing* now, would you?)

Misfortunes, suffering, want, pain, destitution, illness, are evils — out of which God ever brings good ... as He did to Job who “**in all this did not sin.**”

May we do likewise in the face of misfortune, knowing the ever redemptive love of God lifting us up to holiness, before the relentless malice that would pull us down to despair.

The house that God has prepared for you will not collapse. Let us put our treasures there — and know our own nakedness.

Geoffrey K. Mondello  
Editor  
Boston Catholic Journal



Copyright © 2004 - 2023 Boston Catholic Journal. All rights reserved.