

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily  
Sunday, June 30, 2024  
13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle B

A woman was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She prayed for a cure but her condition only worsened. One friend told her that it was foolish to pray because prayer accomplished nothing. Another friend told her that the only reason she was not cured was that her faith was not strong enough. She said that anyone who had enough faith will be cured. Of course, both friends were wrong.

Let me first share with you a personal experience...I visited a parishioner who was very sick. At one point in our conversation, she told me: "Father, I have been praying really hard that I may be cured and healed. But apparently my prayers are not being heard. Does this mean or does this show that I am lacking in faith, is that why the Lord is not curing me of my illness?"

Instead of directly answering her question, I asked her if she knew St. Therese of Lisieux, *the Little Flower*, and she said yes. I told her that Therese got sick with tuberculosis. She was not cured of the illness. And she died at the age of 24. Now, because Therese was not cured, was there anything wrong with her faith? And the woman answered in the negative. After some moments of reflection, she said, "St. Therese was not cured, I believe, because God knew what's best for her?" After realizing and saying that, she was more peaceful.

There was nothing wrong with the faith of Therese. To say that God should have cured her and prolonged her life, to say that God should have healed someone with great faith, is to presume that we know more about it than God, that we know better than God.

The Gospels give ample witness to the power of faith. The story of the woman afflicted with hemorrhages in today's gospel reading testifies to the power of faith. The woman had been laboring under her serious health problem for twelve years, but she had an unshakable faith. Jesus himself identifies the real source of her healing – he says, "Your faith has saved you".

Charles Miller, in his commentary on today's gospel, says: "Faith is necessary, not to bring about cures and alleviate suffering, but to live with God and accept his will in our lives". This also reminds me of what C.S. Lewis said, "We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be".

Henri Nouwen, a great spiritual writer, often delves into the depths of faith and human suffering. He talks a lot about the paradoxes of spiritual life and the unexpected ways God answers our prayers.

A priest friend of mine, did a paraphrasing of Nouwen's words, with his sincere way of personalizing his message:

***I asked for health so I could do great things, but God made me weak so I could learn to trust.***

***I wanted to achieve and gain accolades, but God allowed me to experience failure, so I could find my worth in Him alone.***

***I asked for strength to control my destiny, but God taught me to surrender and lean on Him.***

***I sought wealth to secure my happiness, yet God showed me the richness of a simple, humble life.***

***I wanted power to command respect, but God revealed the power of vulnerability.***

***I desired all things to enjoy life, but God gave me life to enjoy all things.***

***In the end, God did not grant my every wish, but He gave me everything I truly needed.***

***My prayers, spoken and unspoken, were answered, not as I had imagined, but in the way that was best for me.***

***In my weakness, I found strength.***

***In my poverty, I discovered wisdom.***

***In my infirmity, I learned to do better things.***

***God's answers were not what I had sought, but they brought me closer to His heart.***

***Indeed, I am blessed beyond measure, for God's ways, though mysterious, are always filled with love and grace.***

***He knows the desires of our hearts, and in His divine wisdom, He grants us what we truly need.***