

**Homily for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 3, 2018**

**Mother of Dolours Parish
Vandalia, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: last year, during Holy Week, Mimi London, a 56-year-old woman, received news that would change her life. She was diagnosed with neuroendocrine carcinoma, a type of cancer that is understood to be more or less undetectable until it has reached the point where there is no hope for a cure. In her tenth journal post on her “Caringbridge” account, she deals with the type of seemingly hopeless situation that Job encountered in our first reading today. She wrote of being stripped of her health and happiness and the process that led her to the peace that comes with surrender, even while still encountering the challenges of her daily life.

Like Mimi, we have all experienced being stripped in some way: perhaps it is through the loss of a job, a relationship ending, receiving a diagnosis that is life-altering, not getting a scholarship, failing an exam, or even one’s parents getting divorced. These losses come our way without

our wanting them to be part of our lives. A common reaction to these sorts of situations is to wonder, “Why me?” or to think that “life is not fair” and in doing so, let our misfortune get the best of us. However, dwelling on the situation or even blaming ourselves or others does not change our situation. As a matter of fact, the hope that comes from our surrendering ourselves to our Lord and His plan for our lives is the only remedy to the sense of despair that we may experience in these difficult situations.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this sort of surrender is an act of the will. While being stripped of something that we value is out of our control, surrendering ourselves to God is a choice that we make. Just a few moments ago we heard the account of how Job lost everything that was dear to him: his wife, children, property and ultimately his health. If that was not bad enough, Job’s friend, Eliphaz, rather than being supportive, accused him of being responsible for his misfortune due to his sins. In the midst of all of this, Job understandably moves from being helpless to being hopeless, for he feels that God has abandoned him and sees no reason to live. However, once Job came to the understanding that he was not in control and surrendered his life into God’s hands, he found the peace that he was so desperately wanting. So, let us always remember that when we

encounter situations that seem bleak, or when we, like Job, feel like we cannot afford to lose anything else, it is only when we surrender ourselves to the Lord's will that we will experience peace.

Our Gospel reading today addresses this same concept of surrendering our lives to the will of our Heavenly Father. In the account that we heard from Mark's Gospel, Jesus spent all day healing in Capernaum, and when the disciples encouraged Him to stay longer to continue healing the next day, our Lord obeyed instead the will of His Father and went on to another town. This action of Our Lord shows that way to surrender one's own will to the will of God is by listening to our Lord and obeying His commands. Jesus gave us the perfect example of this: He prayed often, speaking to His Father to understand His Father's will. If Jesus, the Son of God, needed to "check in" with His Father, then we certainly need to do the same. May we be ever attentive to the voice of our Lord as He speaks to us in the silence of our hearts through sacred Scripture, the Church and those holy people around us, and so be open to the grace that the Lord gives us when we surrender our lives to His will.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our Lord knows what it is like to be abandoned, misunderstood, to lose relationships, and to have a faith

devoid of feeling. Indeed, on the cross He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”¹ But His faith extended beyond His feelings of abandonment, for with His last breath, in a final act of surrender, Jesus exclaimed, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”² As we receive our Lord in the most Holy Eucharist at this Mass, may we pray for that same spirit of surrender and so echo the words of our Lord, by surrendering our lives into His hands.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Matthew 27:46

² Luke 23:46