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**We must be our brother's keepers**

By Father Albert Shamon  
Sunday's readings: (R3) Mark 1:29-39; (R1) Job 7:1-4, 6-7; (R2) 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23.

When Jesus walked this earth, He was mightily tempted to become a welfare worker. No person ever pitied the sick, the disturbed or the helpless as deeply as He did.

One evening in the town of Capernaum, Jesus cured the ailments of everyone brought to Him. But the next morning, Jesus got up and went to a lonely desert spot to pray. Why? To resist the temptation to stay on in Capernaum and cure everybody — to resist the temptation of reducing the Gospel to a purely social ministry or a liberation theology.

Thus, when Simon and the others wanted Him to go back to Capernaum and continue with His miracles, Jesus firmly refused, saying, "Let us move on . . . that I may proclaim the good news . . . That is what I have come to do."

The great Paul also clearly saw what the mission of the apostle must be. "I am under compulsion to preach the Gospel," he wrote. "I have no other choice."

To heal the sick or drive out demons is not why Jesus came to earth. Yes, we must help the sick, the poor, the afflicted — by all means! But we must always keep our priorities straight: The first task of the apostle is to preach the Gospel.

That is why apparitions occur in the Church. The Gospel message often gets clouded, so God sends Our Lady to dissipate the cloudy thinking.

I do not think the messages of Lourdes and Fatima ever really got through to the majority of Catholics. Most people generally visit these shrines just to ask for something for themselves. That is why Our Lady has found it necessary to appear at Medjugorje. The messages of Fatima, Lourdes and now Medjugorje are for mankind, the Church, the world — not for our personal pieties. God's plan for humanity is the salvation of the whole world. That is why Jesus died.

One of the great mistakes we tend to make in our prayer lives is to focus exclusively on our

**A Word for Sunday**

own personal needs. Like the murderer Cain, some tend to say, "I'm not my brother's keeper." Well, that is precisely what Our Lady and the Gospel tell us to be — our brothers' keepers. Our Lady asks us to expand our prayer horizons. At Fatima, she asked that we pray for sinners going to hell and for the conversion of Russia, the land of studied atheism. But who paid attention? So, again at Medjugorje Our Lady has repeated her requests. She wants us to become catholic in our prayer lives — to broaden our outlooks to include everyone, especially sinners. The point of her messages is that we are in a spiritual ghetto, thinking only about ourselves and not about God's plan and her plan — the salvation of mankind.

Mirjana, one of the visionaries of Medjugorje who is now studying in Sarajevo, ceased having daily apparitions of Our Lady in 1982. However, Our Lady did promise to continue appearing to her on her birthdays, March 18. On March 18, 1985, Mirjana's 20th birthday, Our Lady appeared to her for about 20 minutes. She pleaded with Mirjana, and through her with us, to pray for non-believers. Here are the exact words Mirjana reported: "They (non-believers) are also my children. I suffer much on account of them. If they only knew what awaits them if they do not convert . . . Please pray for them, Mirjana" (Blue Book, p. 139).

That plea is addressed to us also. Our Lady asks that we pray the complete rosary — joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries — and that we fast on Wednesdays and Fridays — on bread and water, if possible.

Why? For ourselves? No, that His kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven.

**Job: The troubles of a just man**

By Cindy Bassett  
Job's 10 children had all come today to celebrate his birthday. But before going to join his family, Job bowed his head and prepared a sacrifice to God. "Dear Lord," Job said as he bowed his head. "You are the author of my life; everything comes from you. Please forgive me if I or even one of my children has unknowingly offended you. Blessed be your name forever!"

Meanwhile in heaven, God heard Job's words and remarked, "My servant Job is a holy and upright man. He has no equal anywhere in the world." And all of the angels who had gathered around God quickly agreed.

"Well, what do you expect?" a harsh voice asked, interrupting the calm. "Job has 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 oxen, 500 donkeys and more servants to wait on him than any other person in Uz has. By my calculations, that makes Job the wealthiest man in the whole world."

"Satan," God replied, immediately recognizing the speaker. "You haven't the mind to understand the goodness of a man like Job."

"Superficial piety, at best," Satan scoffed. "Take everything away from Job, and I'll show you how quickly his goodness disintegrates into ashes!"

"You're wrong, Satan, and to prove it, I'll allow you to do what you will with Job's possessions. But you may not harm Job in any way," God commanded.

"Done!" Satan said with a smirk. And he went eagerly about his evil schemes. The very next day, great tragedy and sorrow came into Job's life.

"Job, Job!" a servant yelled. "The Sabceans attacked this morning as we plowed your fields. Not one of your farmhands survived. All of your donkeys and oxen are gone!"

Before Job could even utter a word to this man, another servant ran in to deliver more bad news. "A storm like fire has rained down from heaven," he said. "Lightening struck with such force that it killed every one of your sheep. Not even one remains!"

Right on this man's heels, a third servant entered the room with word of a third disaster. "Master, it must have happened during the night. The Chaldeans raided your barns and stole every one of your camels!" the man related.

**The Bible Corner**

This was upsetting news indeed, but Job didn't complain. Instead, he dismissed his servants and called his wife. "It was God who bestowed these possessions on us," he told her. "And it is God's right to take them away. Besides, my family is the joy of my life. I have seven sons and three daughters to comfort me."

But later in the day, a neighbor came with the worst news of all. "Job, suddenly I heard a great roaring in the sky as a fierce windstorm came up. It blew down the roof of your son's house, and the walls collapsed. All 10 of your children had gathered in the house," he sobbed. "All of them are dead."

Job tore at his hair in grief and fell face down on the ground. Nevertheless, in all of his sorrow, Job spoke not a word against God.

But Satan remained skeptical. He returned to God, saying, "Job is in perfect health. Take that away, and I'll show you a different man."

"This, too, I will allow, Satan," God said. "But you may not take Job's life."

All of heaven watched in horror as Satan struck Job with a dreadful malady. Every part of his body was covered with huge, painful boils.

"Job, it is not use," his wife lamented. "You've lost everything now. Curse God and die!"

"Am I married to a heathen?" Job shouted angrily. "Where did you learn to accept only good things from God? I will never curse my Lord!"

So Job, once the wealthiest man in the world, went alone to the outskirts of Uz. When he came to the town dump, he sat with the rest of the discarded items among the ashes. As far as he could see in every direction was evidence of destruction.

To be continued . . .  
Scripture reference: Job, Chapters 1, 2, 3. The name Job means "persecuted one."

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