

Strength to carry the cross

Suffering can come into our lives in many and various ways. It can come through sickness, maybe a serious illness; or through sadness arising from the incapacity or death of someone we love.

Even if we are in good health, we can suffer as a result of difficulties in business or employment. Those on the land know well the problems that come with a long drought or a sudden storm. The breakdown of significant relationships with others can be another cause of suffering.

In whatever way suffering comes into our lives we need help and strength to cope.

In the readings today we hear how Abram and Paul found strength in their difficulties. Abram put his trust in God. In the first Eucharistic Prayer he is called “our father in faith”. He provides us with a model in our living of the life of faith. God called him to leave the security of his homeland and to go to a foreign country. Abram said “yes” to the call and responded by putting his trust in God.

Paul, imprisoned for preaching the Good News of God’s love, encouraged Timothy to “bear the hardships for the sake of the Good News” (second reading). Paul, too, put his trust in God.

The apostles who witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration fell on their faces when they heard God’s voice. But Jesus encouraged them to put aside their fears and trust in him. Because we have faith in Jesus, we heed the voice of the Father telling us to listen to his Son, the Beloved.

So we have the example of those who have gone before us to inspire us as we face our own hardships in life. And we don’t rely just on people from the Bible. There are people we know who have inspired us by their faith and trust.

We can join with the apostles in saying, “Lord, it is wonderful for us to be here”. It is wonderful for us to be here because our faith strengthens and sustains us. In the Mass, Jesus gives himself to us as our food for the journey through life. Through his death and resurrection we have the hope of sharing in the life and love of God forever. We are people of hope.

The time of Lent reminds us that we have to be ready to carry the cross. Part of carrying the cross today is that we live in a society in which many people don’t seem to have much time for God. In such an atmosphere we need to be strong and steadfast. We need to keep close to God through prayer. The time of Lent is a time for us to take stock and renew our efforts in prayer.

May we always have that sense that it is good for us to be here. It is good for us to have faith in Jesus. It is good for us to trust in him and his promise. We are people of hope, bearers of the good news of God’s love.