

healed medically for the body and mind, but spiritually for the soul. The man and his wife continued to suffer throughout. But their spirit prevailed over their body. Crushed, they radiated light. Dr Sacks concludes: *“Let no one imagine that this is easy. It takes a supreme act of faith. Yet it is precisely here that we feel faith’s power to change lives. Great faith can turn pain into love and holy light.”*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (§1501) says: *“Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him.”* Then, at (§1521) a new, Christian dimension is added in the chapter on anointing the sick: *“By the grace of this sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to Christ’s Passion: in a certain way he is consecrated to bear fruit by configuration to the Saviour’s redemptive Passion. Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus.”* (1)Judaism’s Life-Changing Ideas (2020)

-Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: Turn your eyes, O God, our shield; and look on the face of your anointed one; one day within your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

First Reading: Proverbs 9: 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: 32: Taste and see that the Lord is good. /R

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! The Word was made flesh and lived among us; to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God. Alleluia!

Gospel: John: 6: 51-58

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: With the Lord there is mercy; in him is plentiful redemption.



Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly

Reflection: Some thoughts of Dr Jonathan Sacks (3): An approach to suffering: The late Chief Rabbi (1) recounts the experience of a religious Jewish man who one day returned

from the synagogue to find his wife had suffered a devastating stroke. This was just after his retirement when he was looking forward to *“a serene last chapter to a long and good life”*. She survived but their whole life changed. They had to move home and he devoted himself to being her constant carer. Dr Sacks says that their continuing love bathed them in a radiance that was moving and humbling. The man never complained, he never wavered in his faith, but thanked God daily for all the blessings they had enjoyed. Then, after 6 years, the man was diagnosed with an inoperable condition. The man’s response was to seek one thing of God: the grace to live as long as his wife so that she would never be alone. She died 9 months later and he died soon after. His prayer was answered.

Dr Sacks says that the man teaches us about the power of faith to turn pain into loving kindness. Faith was at the heart of his existence. For whatever went well in life he thanked God. For whatever did not he simply asked what God wanted him to learn from this. That mindset had carried him through the good years with humility. Then it carried him through the painful years with courage. Human response to suffering can be to despair or to respond stoically. But the third possibility is to respond with compassion, kindness and love, to become like the olive which, when crushed, produces the pure oil that fuels the light of holiness which burns the holy lamp. In Exodus (27:20) it is written: *“Command the Israelites to bring you clear olive oil, crushed for the light, so that the lamp may always burn”*. When bad things happen, when pain seems unbearable, our faith is challenged. This is natural, not heretical. Moses asked of God: *“Why have You done harm to this people?”* (Exodus 5:22). Yet, *“Why has this happened?”* is the wrong question. We will never know. We are not God. The right question is: *“Given that this has happened, what shall I then do?”* The answer is to heal what can be