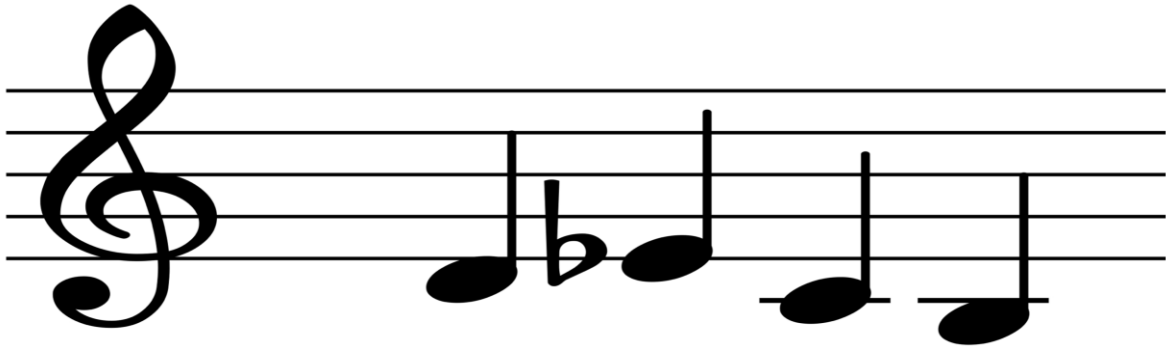


SUFFERING & HOPE, MUSIC & THE WORD OF GOD
33rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 14 NOVEMBER 2021



TODAY WE JOURNEY TOGETHER

From the 2nd Century BC (First Reading)
and the 1st Century AD (today's Gospel passage)
To insights from the 19th Century (a song)
and the 20th Century (a symphony)
and this 21st Century (Address of Pope Francis and meeting in Assisi).

BIBLICAL FORMS DURING TIMES OF OPPRESSION & SUFFERING

In the Scriptures, two types of writings often need explanation.
One is the form of *lament*, as in many of the psalms.

Lament psalms, written over many centuries are songs of lament and hope.
Lament tells us about the troubles and pain of people, and alongside this, is the hope in God.

Another form is the *apocalyptic literature*, as in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and the Book of Revelations (Apocalypse) in the New Testament.
Such passages were composed in times of persecution, where it was not safe to write clearly.

And so symbols and images are used.

For example, the number 12 represents the 12 tribes of Israel.
The Lamb of God is Jesus.

These writings also tell us about the troubles and pain of people,
and alongside this, is the hope in God.

Today's First Reading (Daniel 12:1-13)

(in the 2nd Century BC during the suffering under the Seleucid oppressors),
and today's **Gospel Mark (13:24-32)**
(round the mid to late 60s AD during the Roman Empire oppression),
speak of hard times and hope, in this tradition.

19TH CENTURY EXAMPLE

Let us focus on an example of oppression and hope in the 19th Century. During the time of the terrible sin of slavery in the USA, and the Civil War, the Afro-American spiritual song *“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen”* spoke to people.

It has other variations in title and wording, such *“Nobody knows the trouble I see”* and *“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve had”*.

The line *“Nobody knows my sorrow”* is a powerful line. In some versions is the line *“Nobody knows but Jesus”*. Another well remembered line is *“Sometimes I’m up, sometimes I’m down”*. Let us pause now and remember its words and rhythm, its pain and hope.

[pause]

20TH CENTURY EXAMPLE

Let us now remember a musician or singer or orchestra or band or choir, performing at a concert that we have attended, Think of this performance that you truly appreciated. Perhaps there were three or four Encores, with a standing ovation.

With the focus of this homily on our suffering and hope, let us turn to a performance in the 20th Century where the standing ovation went on and on for around 30 minutes. *Did such an event happen?*

During the terrible persecutions by Stalin in Soviet times, with millions of people suffering and dying, it was not safe to speak the truth.

In 1937, the composer, *Dmitry Shostakovich* in his Symphony Number 5 in D minor, enabled music to tell the story, and the people understood.

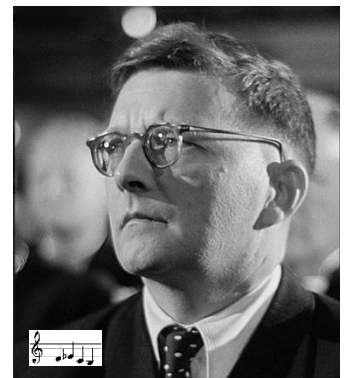
They responded as the music touched their pain, and their fluctuating hope and despair.

Music of suffering and hope continue to speak to us today. And the psalms continue to speak to us today.

POPE FRANCIS IN NOVEMBER 2021

Sometimes, we can speak freely, but we don’t know if people will listen. Pope Francis speaks freely about poverty each year, especially today, on the World Day of the Poor (33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time).

Three quotes from his Address now follow. The full text to Pope Francis message is found [here](#)



Dmitry Shostakovich represented himself with the musical notes DESCH

*“a different approach to poverty is required. ...
With great humility, we should confess
that we are often incompetent when it comes to the poor.
We talk about them in the abstract; we stop at statistics
and we think we can move people’s hearts by filming a documentary.
Poverty, on the contrary, should motivate us to creative planning,
aimed at increasing the freedom needed
to live a life of fulfilment according to the abilities of each person.”*

*“It is not a question of easing our conscience by giving alms,
but of opposing the culture of indifference and injustice we have created with regard to the
poor.”*

*“We need to be open to reading the signs of the times
that ask us to find new ways of being evangelizers in the contemporary world.
Immediate assistance in responding to the needs of the poor must not prevent us
from showing foresight in implementing new signs of Christian love and charity
as a response to the new forms of poverty experienced by humanity today.
It is my hope that the celebration of the World Day of the Poor, now in its fifth year,
will grow in our local Churches and inspire a movement of evangelization
that meets the poor personally wherever they may be.
We cannot wait for the poor to knock on our door; we need urgently to reach them in their
homes,
in hospitals and nursing homes, on the streets
and in the dark corners where they sometimes hide, in shelters and reception centres.
It is important to understand how they feel, what they are experiencing and what their
hearts desire.”*

This year Pope Francis stressed the crucial aspects of listening and mutual sharing. Two days ago, representative groups of the poor across Europe gathered in Assisi to meet with Pope Francis, who listened to them and responded. Instead of a song or symphony, it was the venue selection that was important – **Assisi in Italy where Saint Francis of Assisi lived around 800 years ago.** Stories of pain and suffering, injustice and advocacy, hope and love were shared.

Pope Francis reminds us to never ignore the scandal of poverty. We need to work together.

GOSPEL OF MARK 13:24-32

In the verse before today’s passage, we hear

‘But be alert; I have already told you everything.’

In the verse after today’s passage, we hear

‘Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.’

The scene was set for the Passover in the next chapter. Though the suffering and death of Jesus were still to come,

Jesus prepared his disciples for the end days when he will come in the clouds and call the elect together.

The Gospel reads:

'But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.'

There are signs all around us, whether through music or the Pope's words on Friday in Assisi, and today in Rome. or our own experiences, or what we learn from other people.

We, as people of hope, are called to challenge all forms of oppression.

Jesus reminds us in today's Gospel to read the signs around us.

'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.'

Reading the signs of the Holy Spirit calling us, we share stories of pain and suffering, injustice and advocacy, hope and love, and our working together for a more just and loving world.

As the recent [COP26](#) reminded us, the health of the Earth and the plight of those in poverty are enormous challenges for us now.

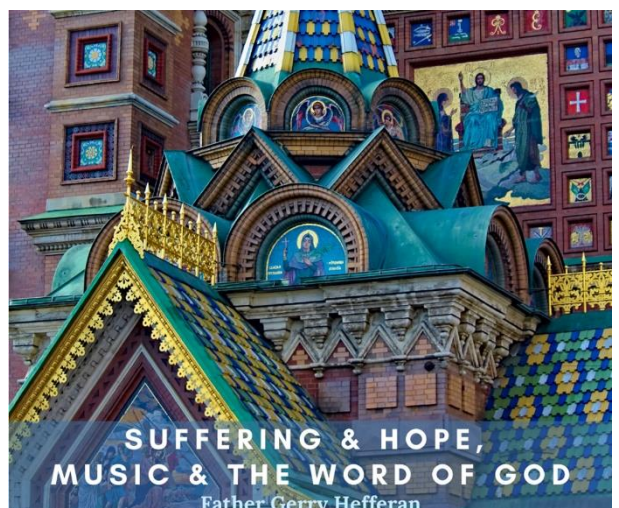
Let us pray.

Come Holy Spirit,
Open our hearts and minds
To your promptings.
Amen

Father Gerry

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/140721.cfm>

The [World Day of the Poor](#) is celebrated on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time and was introduced by Pope Francis in 2017.



The Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood, St. Petersburg, Russia