

Well since this last lockdown began, I have taken up listening to podcasts as I go for my daily walk. The CBC program Ideas has some interesting ones and last week there was a podcast entitled, "Buying Buddha, Selling Rumi."

The show was basically a dialogue with an American academic who had written a book with that title. Well Buddha is of course the founder of Buddhism and Rumi was an Islamic Sufi mystic. But what did this title mean, "Buying Buddha, Selling Rumi" mean?

It was an exploration of the selling and marketing, of religion, not really religion but certain spiritual practices, select writings, commentaries, etc of religion, in particular Eastern religions, hence the title about buying Buddha and selling Rumi. The question was asked why? Why would this be a viable business venture?

And in part it was posited that today we want quick answers. Give me a word, a technique, a program, a spiritual path that will make my life better, fix my problems, that will provide relief from my suffering. I'll pay for it as long as it makes me feel better.

So as we listen to our first reading from the Book of Job we have to admit that it wouldn't be fitting into this podcast, let us listen to Job,

*"... I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me...My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to their end without hope. Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good." (Job 7: 1-7)*

Good luck marketing that as a positive hopeful message. So much for getting that printed on a t-shirt.

Turning to the Gospel, however, Jesus does have something worth marketing. He is performing healing miracles en masse and he is

becoming quite popular. When he retreats for some peace and quiet, St. Peter seeks him out saying everyone is looking for you.

But our Lord does not return to the adoring crowds but makes the decision to move on. His message needs to be preached elsewhere.

We can see that the miracles and the crowds they attracted were not the key, not the most important. There is something more, more than a feel good message.

In the Gospel of Mark when Jesus dies on the cross, the Roman Centurion exclaims, proclaims that this truly the Son of God. The full knowledge of Jesus' divine Sonship comes at the moment of his death. The miracles led up to this, hinted at it but what was most important the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Jesus left the miracles, left the crowd in order to journey to his cross.

This past week in the breviary, the universal prayer book of the Church, on the Thursday of the 4<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time, in the office of readings there was a sermon by Saint Cyril of Jerusalem. He talked about miracles, the different miracles of Jesus, the healings, the feeding of the crowds, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. But who did they touch? one person here, a handful there. Lazarus was raised from the dead but how much longer did he live?

But St. Cyril, asked what is most important, most universal, what applies to all and he looked to the cross and found there something that was for all, for all equally, salvation for the world. In the podcast, "Buying Buddha, Selling Rumi, the professor did give examples from Christianity. But to gaze upon the cross of Christ is about marketing a product, really? As St. Cyril reminds us To look upon the cross is to see God's saving love, freely given to all for the salvation of the whole of humanity.