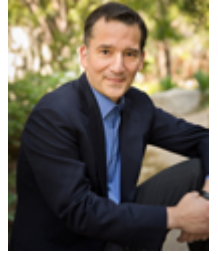


# *Off The Pulpit*

January 23, 2014

## **The Masterpiece of Sorrow**

The book of Job is sunk in sorrow. It tells the troubling story of a man tested by every misfortune, including the egregious speeches of his friends, who manages nonetheless to keep faith. Job refuses to turn away from the God who has turned away from him.



Throughout the generations many explanations have been given to account for the message of this soaring, vexing work. For a moment, however, let us consider the author, whoever he (or she) may have been. Here was a person well acquainted with affliction, who knew the varied trails and travails of the human heart. Doubtless the author had himself suffered loss — everyone does, and in the ancient world, loss was more immediate and uncushioned.

What did our author do? Turned suffering to song. Rather than brood in silence, the author of Job created a masterwork to console others. Robert Frost said that poetry was made of griefs, not grievances. In the book of Job, a poet, summoning his griefs, draws us into the ambit of pain to help us understand our own loss and struggle for faith. For centuries the sad, sick, and bereft have turned the pages of this magnificent work, and found a spirit who expresses the anguish in all our hearts.