

Begin your day with God

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Feb. 9): (R3) Mark 1:29-39; (R1) Job 7:1-4, 6-7; (R2) 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23.

Mark tells us that Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. When Jesus was told about her, he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. Poor lady! She had no time to recuperate. No opportunity for a little pampering by her family. Instead she immediately went back to work looking after the household.

Jesus had the same problem as Simon's mother-in-law. He didn't have any time either. When people found out he could heal their diseases, they started lining up outside his door. Jesus' ministry was a success from the beginning. He found a need and filled it; he found a hurt and healed it. Nearly every family is touched by one sickness or another, so people were bringing their loved ones to Jesus in droves. After all, there were no hospitals, no 24-hour medical clinics. Where else could people turn except to Jesus?

What is important here is that in such circumstances Jesus still took time to pray. Those whom he cured were many, but "rising early the next morning, Jesus went off to a lonely place in the desert; there he was absorbed in prayer." Prayer was such a priority to Christ that there are more than 20 words in the New Testament to describe his prayer life.

Jesus took time to recharge his spiritual batteries. That is important for us to see. Sometimes we think we are too busy to pray. Imagine if there were sick and dying people lined up outside your door each morning waiting for you and, when you went to bed each evening, there was still a line. Wouldn't you think you could legitimately skip over your prayer time? Yet Jesus took time to pray.



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

Don't have your concert first and then tune your instruments. Begin the day with God. That is exactly what Jesus did. He tuned his instrument first.

There is a saying, "Take time to sharpen your axe before you begin cutting." That's practical advice. If we spend time with God before we begin the activity of our day, we will be better prepared for what might come our way. The key to successful people is that before they begin their day, they pray. Jesus did.

But still, Jesus took time for people. He did not shut himself off from others in his desire to commune with God. He was "a man for others." He may have preferred to stay on the mountaintop, but there were people who needed him, so he went out doing the work of his Father.

When we live only for ourselves, our lives are sterile and unfulfilling. When we give ourselves in service to others, our lives have meaning and purpose. Jesus found time to fulfill the purpose for which he had come. Healing the sick and casting out devils were important tasks, obviously, but they were not the primary reason Jesus came. When the disciples were able to track him down, they said, "Everybody is looking for you." Jesus said, "Let's move on to the neighboring villages so that I may proclaim the good news there also. That is what I have come to do."

Healing the sick is an important

part of Jesus' work, but the primary reason Jesus came was to preach the good news of the kingdom.

Often people will put down the church. If the church builds a basketball court or family-life center, some people will say the money ought to have gone to help missionaries overseas. Of course, the church cannot ignore the needs of the poor, the hurting, the desperate. But what is primary is that the church provide a witness to God in the community. The greatest need of people is not a handout, but the knowledge that Christ loves them, died for them and offers his Spirit to them.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, February 10
Genesis 1:1-5; Psalms 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-24, 35; Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday, February 11
Genesis 1:20-2:14; Psalms 84:9; Mark 7:1-15

Wednesday, February 12
Genesis 2:18-3:17; Psalms 104:1-2, 27-30; Mark 7:14-23

Thursday, February 13
Genesis 2:18-25; Psalms 128:1-3; Mark 7:24-30

Friday, February 14
Genesis 3:1-5; Psalms 32:1-2, 5-7; Mark 7:31-37

Saturday, February 15
Genesis 3:9-24; Psalms 90:2-6, 12-13; Mark 8:1-10

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