

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- In today's Gospel...we find Jesus at the end of a very long day.
 - It began in the morning at the synagogue.
 - Jesus got up to speak...and everyone was mesmerized by His teaching.
 - With nothing but a word...He drove out demons.
 - And so in no time...word about Him...was spreading all over the place.
- Today's gospel...picks up the story.
 - After the synagogue...Peter invites Jesus back to his home.
 - And even before He has a chance to sit down...
 - Jesus heals his mother-in-law.
 - And that's when people from all over...
 - start banging on the door for help.
 - It wasn't until very early the next morning...
 - that Jesus was finally able to break away...for a bit of peace and quiet.
 - But even then...the disciples chased Him down.
 - The Greek word that's used here for "*pursued him*"
 - it's very strong...
 - it's the same word...
 - that might be used for a predator...
 - chasing down its prey.
 - Jesus is in demand because of His power to heal...
 - but...
 - because of His desire is to preach to others...
 - He needs to move on.
 - There is just so much more work...that needs to be done!
- Miracles aside...
 - I think most of us can relate to that hectic pace of life...even during pandemic...
 - whether it's family responsibilities...
 - the demands of our jobs or school...
 - many of us barely have time to catch our breath.
 - This pace of life...makes it imperative...
 - that we follow Jesus' example...
 - of finding a quiet place...
 - where we can be alone to pray.
 - Even just a few minutes a day...
 - can help alleviate a lot of stress and anxiety in our lives...
 - and help give us the grace and the strength we need...
 - to do every kind of good work.
- In order to begin to experience this kind of grace...the first step...
 - is to find that quiet space and time...that works most every day.
 - For Jesus...
 - early in the morning was the best... before everyone else was awake.

- For you...
 - that might mean late night...after everyone's in bed...
 - or later in the morning...when they've gone to work or school.
- But the trick...
 - is to find the time and the place...
 - where you are least likely to be interrupted.
- I know a young married couple...
 - who get up each and every day...before their kids...
 - to spend a half hour in prayer.
 - They have 4 kids under the age of 8...and another on the way...
 - if they can do it...you can do it!
- The next step...
 - once you are able to quiet yourself...
 - is to acknowledge God's presence...and His love for you.
 - God is always present to us.
 - So we don't have to come up with...
 - the right combination of words...
 - to attract His attention.
 - He is always aware of us...
 - but we do need to make ourselves aware of Him.
 - And once we are...
 - we should reflect on His unconditional love.
 - No matter how good or bad...
 - we judge ourselves to be...
 - or we might actually be...
 - God always loves us.
 - Like a mother who hasn't seen her child in years...
 - God will always be happy to have a visit...
 - no matter what kind of shape we're in...
 - the greatest sinner...or the greatest saint.
- Another helpful step in our prayer...
 - is to reflect...on what our heart desires from the Lord.
 - Are we looking for peace?
 - Are we searching for a sense of purpose in our lives?
 - What is stirring up in our hearts...as we lift them up to the Lord?
 - This is important...
 - because if those desires in our heart are good...
 - God is actually the one stirring them up.
 - He makes us long for certain things...
 - only so that He can satisfy those desires...at a later time.
 - And the greater our longing...
 - the longer our wait...
 - the greater the gift...He's preparing to give.

- So find a quiet time and place...
 - acknowledge God's presence and His unconditional love...
 - check in with your heart...to see what desires are present...
- And after that...
 - there are so many ways to continue.
 - You can pray with a passage from Sacred Scripture...
 - or pray with the mysteries of the Rosary...
 - spending time savoring...
 - the words and images you find.
 - Or you might just sit with the Lord...
 - and stay quiet and focused...
 - on His loving presence.
 - But follow the Holy Spirit's lead...
 - because He knows what's best for you...
 - at any given moment.
 - So ask Him:
 - lead me Holy Spirit...
 - teach me how to pray.
- And finally...
 - Saint Francis de Sales...
 - gives us some good advice...
 - about how to end our prayer.
 - He tells us to gather up a "*spiritual bouquet.*"
 - In other words...
 - we should call to mind again...
 - all the thoughts, feelings and inspirations...
 - that we experienced in prayer...the fruit of it...
 - and the idea is gather them up...
 - like bunch of flowers...
 - so we can enjoy them...
 - throughout the rest of the day.
 - By bringing to mind God's love when we're anxious...
 - by remembering a Bible passage when we're struggling...
 - we're stretching the benefits of that time in prayer.
- As Job says...
 - life can be a drudgery...
 - filled with pain and restlessness.
 - But if we spend some quiet time with Lord...each and every day...
 - rather than having our day...dictated by life around us...
 - we'll be guided by the inspirations of the Holy Spirit from within.
 - And that will make...all the difference in the world.