

Fifth Sunday of the Year (B) – Spiritual Resourcing

The Gospel of St. Mark is the shortest one, but there is a lot packed into each section of it.

In today's passage we hear how Jesus begins his day with prayer – before dawn he goes to a quiet place for that purpose. It is an essential practice for him.

It is the time when he can give undivided attention to the key relationship in his life – with his heavenly Father, with the Spirit of God. In that time of openness to the Divine Love and Life he receives wisdom to know what he must do, and the heart to do it. In his human nature He is enlightened and strengthened.

He needs to be because there are many demands that will be put upon him each and every day. He must be sensitive to a wide variety of needs; he must know the right thing to do or to say; he must have the courage to carry that out no matter what the cost. Jesus finds his spiritual resources for his ministry in that time of prayer.

He needs to have great generosity of love to respond to all those who cry out to him for help. There are those who suffer physical ailments, mental anguish, or emotional distress. There are those who seek guidance in the midst of the confusion of their life. They beset him all day long, from dawn to sunset and even beyond: *Everybody is looking for him.*

Jesus also has to be strong against the power of the evil one. The Gospel does not mince words. The devil is abroad, taking over hearts and minds, individuals and human groups both large and small. Jesus recognises Satan's many manifestations, contends with him and overcomes him.

From the moment of our Baptism we are all called to share in the ministry of Jesus in the particular circumstances of life in which we find ourselves placed. We soon discover that cannot be faithful to our task unless we turn our hearts and minds each day to God in prayer. We all need the resources to love. The more we try to live according to the Gospel and play our part in building up Christ's kingdom on the earth the more we will recognise our utter dependence on God's grace. Our human weaknesses and inadequacies soon become apparent.

In our own prayer, and through the prayers of others made on our behalf, we are helped to cope with the various demands put upon us in each and every day, from dawn to dusk – and beyond. Members of the family of faith need each other, and should be helping each other not only in practical ways but also in this 'spiritual resourcing'. That is why it is important for us to gather together as a community – to be put in mind of each other, and to commend each other to the love of the Lord – to bring to him *all we know who are sick.*

And a significant dimension of our daily struggle is with the machinations of the evil one.

It seems to be out of fashion to speak of our ‘warfare with the powers of darkness’, as once we did so naturally.

This is strange indeed considering we live in times when international relations are so precariously placed, and within each country - even those which are seemingly stable - there are causes of tension within the community which could so easily explode into disorder and destruction.

Even within the fellowship of faith, within local churches, and in our domestic circumstances – our family life - there is always the risk of good work being damaged and the spread of the kingdom being inhibited because petty squabbles develop into serious personal confrontations.

In every generation and in every location the devil will always endeavour to insinuate himself into the troubled hearts of individuals, and into situations of social tension.

Wherever there has been an upset, on however small a scale, Satan is provided with an opportunity to gain access into the fabric, the matrix, of our personal and interpersonal lives. Once he has a foothold he will seek to gain increasing control of the situation. He can cause the maximum disruption to come about in even the most promising of human relations.

As Jesus knew, Beelzebub must be dismissed before his strength is able to overpower us, or to break down all that has been painstakingly constructed.

Today’s Gospel tells us that Simon’s mother in law was seized by a fever. Jesus *took her by the hand and helped her up*. The fever left her, and she was again able to minister to them.

In this Mass we could pray that whenever we become discouraged, distressed, or disunited – whenever there is discord within our hearts or in our relationships with each other - the **hand of the Lord** may reach in and rescue us and save the situation before it gets out of our control.

This is His very necessary work of redemption and it must continue in the lives of faithful Christians day by day – the devil must be cast out if the Kingdom is to grow.