



5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)



Mark 1: 29-39

As soon as Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to Jesus all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."

He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came to do." And Jesus went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

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Reflection:

In reality, there is no one busier than Jesus; and, yet, there is no one found more often in prayer. This is not meant as a criticism on our inability to find time for prayer at times, but the crucial importance that of staying in contact with our Father in Heaven. If it was so crucial to Jesus, guiding his every move, including his painful withdrawal from the people who sought him for the sake of those who had not yet heard the message, how much more for us, who need to remain grounded in who we are called to be, lest we get swept away by the busy-ness of life.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

- "What is the role of prayer in my life?"
- "What is the role of prayer in our family's life?"



A House of Prayer:

Design a simple sign, using whatever art form you are most comfortable with, with the words, “House of Prayer.” If you are looking for a simple logo, draw a simple house with a pair of praying hands forming the roof. Decorate it with a nice frame, wreath or colourful heart. Find an appropriate place to hang it.

Try to work prayer into your daily rituals. Keep it short, dignified and meaningful. Prayer can be as simple as tracing the sign of the cross on your child’s forehead upon going to school or asking God to send his holy angels to look after you as you embark on a journey. Prayer may include standard prayers you know (Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.) or short prayers you make up on the spot. A simple invocation like: “Come, Holy Spirit and give us N. (i.e. wisdom, courage, strength, etc.)” is sometimes sufficient. Here are some ideas, but don’t take on too much at once:

- Pray before mealtime.
- Pray at bedtime.
- Pray when going on a trip.
- Prayer partners (each Sunday have everyone pick a family member’s name out of a jar).
- Pray when you hear/see an ambulance.
- Pray for your child(ren)/parents.
- Pray before making a major decision.
- Pray together when there is disagreement.
- Pray when you/your child(ren) is worried.
- Pray when someone in the family is sick.
- Pray before you send your child to school.
- Set aside a short period of time each day (make “a date with God”).
- Come to church at the beginning of each week and connect with Christ: His Word, His Sacrament and His People.

Have a prayer jar on a little table in the entrance of your house, decorate it and provide a pen and slips of paper for people to use. The “prayer requests” that are collected might become part of a bedtime ritual, a Sunday Supper or some appropriate set aside to pray for others. Let it be known to your family and friends that you are willing to pray for them.

Good Opening Lines when Praying with Children:

- “Thank you, Jesus for...”
- “Help me/my friend, Jesus...”
- “Strengthen me/my friend, Jesus...”
- “I love you, Jesus...”
- “Forgive me, Jesus...”
- “Open my heart, Jesus...”
- “Show me the way, Jesus...”
- “Help me to see, Jesus...”
- “Give me the courage, Jesus...”

Listen to [*Thank you, Lord*](#) by Carey Landry, Once you know the song you can substitute many things for which you are grateful.



St. Simeon Stylites: (Bedtime Story)

Many years ago, in the land of Syria lived a young boy named Simeon. Simeon's father was a shepherd, who looked after sheep. As Simeon got older, his father would bring him along and teach him all there is to know about sheep and the beauty of creation.

When Simeon was thirteen he heard someone speak to him about Jesus. Simeon was so impressed with what he heard that he decided to give his whole life in knowing Jesus. His heart was burning so hot for love of Jesus that, by the time he was fifteen, was living with a small group of monks, spending his days in work and prayer.

But Simeon's love for Christ continued to grow. While his brother monks were sleeping, Simeon stayed up to pray. While his brother monks were having supper, Simeon decided to fast. Over time, Simeon's desire to give more of his life to God began to affect the life of the community. One day, Simeon decided to go off on his own.

For the next year and a half, Simeon lived alone in a hut. During Lent, he neither ate nor drank for forty days and forty nights. Because his actions seemed extreme and strange many people began to talk about him and wonder if he was okay.

It is hard to know why Simeon left his hut in favour of living high on a ledge in the surrounding mountains, but many believe that he was looking for greater privacy and an even closer relationship to God. High on his ledge, Simeon would sometimes be visited by people looking for answers. We often think of Simeon when we think of people climbing a tall mountain to talk to a holy man for advice on prayer.

Not being able to find the peace and privacy that he longed for, Simeon finally decided to spend the rest of his life on a small platform, on a tall pillar (a stylite) in the middle of the wilderness. Twice as tall as a telephone pole, Simeon would sit cross-legged almost day and night, totally absorbed in prayer. Once a day, bread and water were sent up the pole by putting a basket at the end of a rope. During Lent, the basket was only used once a week.

The people never stopped coming. They came to Simeon seeking advice. Simeon got used to making time for them during the day. The answers he gave were so well thought out that many people made the long trip into the wilderness to see him. World leaders and bishops would even send messengers to consult Simeon on matters that were important to them.

Simeon lived on his pole for 37 years and, by now, he was getting old. His love for God never failed. His love for God's people only increased. One day his earlier friends, with whom he had lived as monks, came to test him. They wanted to see if he would leave his pole. They asked him to come down, as a sign of his promise to be obedient to his earlier promise to them and to God. Simeon did, not afraid of what others might think. His friends were impressed. "Here's a man who does not insist on his own way, but is even willing to leave his place in this world behind," they said. And, from that moment onward, they never questioned why Simeon lived on a pole and what he thought of all the attention he was getting.

There have been a few more holy men who followed Simeon's example by living on a pole. But none as well respected as Simeon Stylites. In a day and age, when this is no longer done, and the whole idea may sound quite funny, we can ask the questions: "Where would we find our holy men and women today?" and "What little things could we be doing to find a place and a time for prayer?"



Prayer Corner:

Here are three very simple prayers. You may want to open your arms wide when praying them.

Holy Spirit Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit,
fill my heart and the heart of my family,
with the fire of your love;
help me to burn with your love
for God and for all peoples,
both now and always.
I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Samuel's Prayer:

Speak Lord, your servant is listening;
say but the word, and I will do it.
Help me to hear you in the many needs around me;
help me to listen, so that I may hear you.

Open my Eyes, Ears, Heart and Arms:

Open my eyes, Lord, so that I may see you,
open my ears, Lord, so that I may hear you,
open my heart, Lord, so that I may love you,
open my arms, Lord, so that I may receive.

Take a moment to write your own spontaneous prayer to God. Let it come straight from your heart.