

Homily For Tuesday of the 23rd Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - September 7, 2021

Col 2:6-15 "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him."

Psalms 145:1-11 "All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and your faithful shall bless you."

Luke 6:12-19 "Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God."

Pray First, Then Act

Introduction

Occasionally, there are retreats where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for prayer over a whole night. If you have been on one of those retreats, there is usually a sign up to spend an hour with our Lord. A few times I have signed up for one of those hours, say 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. It sounded like it would be fun, but when my alarm rang to take my turn, it was the last thing in the world I wanted to do. However, it is an amazing experience to spend that hour with God when everything else is silent, my body is tired and cold and it is just me and Jesus. What intimacy with the Lord is possible. It's true that God can seem so distant at a moment like that in the middle of the night. But God can also be so close, so intimate, you feel like you could touch him with your very heart.

Luke

It seems pretty clear that Luke wants us to see how even Jesus, in his human life, needed that kind of intimacy with God, to sustain the power of his ministry. A whole night in prayer ... on a mountain. Why couldn't he just pray himself to sleep in his bed? But no, he went out into a wild place to be utterly alone to be in intimate and complete communion with God. There are times when we just need to find some way to have nothing else between us and God, no distractions or comforts.

On the mountain, Jesus conformed his human will to that of the divine will of God. Perhaps that moment in the garden could not have happened, when Jesus asked if his cup of suffering could be taken away, yet the Father's will be done.

Perhaps this night of prayer in solitude on a mountain was part of his preparation to make that sacrifice possible, which was the means of our salvation and the reason we are present here at this moment. If he had not formed himself this way, could he have gone to the cross for us? If he needs it certainly we do. See what results from this night of prayer.

First: Jesus chose the twelve and called them apostles. Do I pray before making an important decision? Jesus chose twelve ordinary people and called them to become extraordinary. Aren't we, also called to be extraordinary.

It looks like they found him out in the wilderness in the morning because it is after that when Jesus and the disciples came down the mountain, to where the people were. So, secondly, Jesus entered back into the world.

Third, he stood on a level place. Luke uses this image to distinguish this place from the mountain. The mountain is the place of encounter with God. The level place is the encounter with the world. We also need both. We need to go up on the mountain to be with God, and so return to the world carrying that presence with us in our hearts.

Fourth, Jesus engaged a great multitude of people. We have been starved for encountering many people, except on Zoom, but that doesn't mean we have been without interaction. For Jesus in this passage it is all kinds of people, Jews and Gentiles. For us, our time with God can bear fruit in whatever interactions we have with those around us.

Fifth, Jesus preached. They had come to hear him and he didn't disappoint them. Most of our interaction is in pretty ordinary conversations. Those are important. They are the people God has put in our lives. Even this preaching is temporary. When I step down from here, I must let go of this kind of moment and interact with one person at a time.

Sixth, he healed disease and unclean spirits. Physical healing always points to the deeper spiritual healing. This should be something we can relate to. We are desperate to avoid becoming sick, and are anxious about whether we will get better. But, if we do successfully navigate an illness, will this guarantee our

happiness? I suggest to you it will not. The demonic spirits seek to keep us trapped in our anxiety.

Colossians

St. Paul refers to this in his letter to the Colossians as being taken captive by the elemental spirits of the universe. The word used here literally means to be 'kidnapped' by those spirits. How does Paul recommend avoiding this kidnapping? Walk with Christ. Live your life in him. Root yourself in him. Build yourself up in him. Build yourself up in the knowledge of God. Do not follow the mindset of the world, what he calls philosophies and empty deceit.

Call to Action

The psalmist insists on the need to thank and praise God. God doesn't need our thanks and praise. We do. We are made to thank and praise because it is a necessary ingredient for our happiness.

Power came out from Jesus. Super hero mentality today suggests that that power is a possession, something that belongs to someone. But, even Jesus, in his human experience in the world, had to connect himself with the source of all power, the God who creates and sustains all life. People everywhere around us need healing. Today we are troubled by many things, by many evil spirits. The power from the mountain now wants to operate in us to participate in that healing.

Let us find a way to be with God alone on a mountain. Let this experience inform our most important decisions, our interactions with the world and its need for healing. Let the power of Jesus Christ be known in the world kidnapped by fear. Let words of thanksgiving be ever on our lips and in our hearts. Let us be in communion with God who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Arise, O God, and defend your cause, and forget not the cries of those who seek you.*

Collect: *Father, bring to perfection in our hearts the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters, that we may merit to enter into the inheritance which you have promised .*

Colossians: *As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him. When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses, he forgave us all our trespasses.*

Psalm: *The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you.*

Luke: *Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles ... Jesus stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people. They had come to hear him and to be healed. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.*