

Jesus, the Man of Prayer, the Man for Others

Homily for January 11th 2023

One of the gifts we have been given is the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism provides the authoritative interpretation in the Bible and today I want to share with you paragraph 2602 which is the Church's interpretation of the Gospel reading we just heard from Mark 1.

Here we read:

Jesus often draws apart to pray in solitude, on a mountain, preferably at night. He includes all men in his prayer, for he has taken on humanity in his incarnation, and he offers them to the Father when he offers himself. Jesus, the Word who has become flesh, shares by his human prayer in all that "his brethren" experience; he sympathizes with their weaknesses in order to free them. It was for this that the Father sent him. His words and works are the visible manifestation of his prayer in secret.¹

Notice that Jesus' prayer was the way he offered all people to the Father because in his prayer he is offering himself to the Father. It was from the life centred in prayer that all of his work originated. What impresses me about this teaching is how it not only references our Gospel but the reading from Hebrews.

Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.²

With this in mind look again at the Catechism reference:

Jesus, the Word who has become flesh, shares by his human prayer in all that "his brethren" experience; he sympathizes with their weaknesses in order to free them.

What we see in these texts is that Jesus was the man of prayer which in turn allowed him to be the man for others. We see in today's Gospel text how people were searching for him. There was a hunger on the part of people to be close to Jesus because in Jesus they experienced the man who identified with those who suffer. His healing work was an extension of his love and mercy as he exorcised demons, healed the sick and showed such tender compassion. We read of this in the simple description St Mark gives us of Jesus' interaction with St Peter's mother-in-law:

¹ Catholic Church. (2000). Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed., p. 625). United States Catholic Conference.

² [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#) (Heb 2:17-18). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up³

When we think about what this means for us, we understand the Church is to be the extension of the incarnation through space and time. This means that St Peter's is invited by Jesus to be a community of prayer and a community that is here for others. This happens as we understand that we exist to be the Body of Christ through our worship of God – which is prayer - and our service to others by evangelism and ministry to the sick and suffering.

Again to quote the Catechism:

By her very mission, “the Church ... travels the same journey as all humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world: she is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God.”⁴

Just as Jesus shared in this earthly lot so do we. In 2023 we will be considering more fully how we are to further this work of Jesus in Calgary's North West as we cultivate here at St Peter's a community that like leaven increases the presence of Jesus as we understand that we exist to be a community of prayer that is here for others.

³ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#) (Mk 1:31). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁴ Catholic Church. (2000). [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (2nd Ed., p. 226). United States Catholic Conference.