

## Homily for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

When you open your Bible,  
never know what you're going to get.

    You might find a good story.

    You might find some good advice.

    You find a new perspective on an issue that's been puzzling you.

And sometimes you get more than you bargain for.  
Sometimes there's so much going on,  
it's like a grab bag at a carnival...  
and you don't know if you should reach in and grab something or not.

Well, that's what the gospel hands us today: A Grab Bag.

Today's gospel passage is a grab-bag stuffed full  
of all "the stuff" that clutters up our life:

Go ahead.  
Just reach in and grab something!

Quick overview:

    Mother-in-law...with a headache!

    People ringing the doorbell...soon they are banging at the door

    It's the end of the day...but the work doesn't let up!

    It follows them home.

    Jesus and his disciple don't have time  
        to sit down and eat

Sound familiar?

FEEL familiar?

- head-aches
- in-laws
- demanding customers and clients
- overtime
- high expectations
- unrelenting pressure
- a lack of privacy

Yep, it's grab bag of problems.  
Reach on in and pull out your favorite daily hassle.

No wonder the Lord got up early the morning  
to slip away,  
get out of that crazy house,  
and find himself some peace and quiet!

Did you notice how he snuck away?

Amid all that stress and tension,  
there's that tiny little verse that says this:

“Rising very early before dawn,  
Jesus left and went to a deserted place,  
where he prayed.”

I don't blame him, and I'm sure you don't either.

Let's zero in that verse for just a moment  
and explore what lies inside of it.

...

Does the Lord awake with a start?...as out of bad dream?  
Is the dirt floor warm to the touch of his feet?  
Is he careful not to wake the other disciples?

Once outside, how far must he walk?  
Does he head for the fishing dock?  
Or does he cut through a vineyard or an olive grove,  
Or a farmer's field covered with a heavy dew?

As he makes his way,  
ask yourself:  
Why does the Lord expend all this *effort*  
to make his way to what Bible describes as **a deserted place**?  
Is it just to grab a few minutes of peace and quiet?

I doubt it.

In my mind, He wasn't just looking for peace and quiet.

Rather, He was seeking something you and I hardly ever talk about.  
He was looking for something that every human being needs...  
but it is a need that very few humans realize that it is something

that a busy and active life requires.

I'm talking about SOLITUDE.

He was reaching for a moment of solitude,  
Which is another way of saying  
that he was reaching for a moment of truth.

He was seeking **the truth**.

The truth about his life, his purpose, his identity.

A truth so deep that it can only be uncovered in the experience called Solitude.

\* \* \*

The great mystics of Catholic tradition,

St. Anthony of the Desert

St. Benedict

St. Teresa of Avila

St Catherine of Siena

St John of the Cross

These folks,

they climbed mountains, they entered deserts, they lived in caves

they did whatever they had to do

to experience the intense power and strength that comes from solitude.

So, you see, we aren't talking here about grabbing "a little peace and quiet."

But, neither are talking about something that is beyond the reach  
of a typical, everyday Catholic  
leading an ordinary, everyday and often busy and hectic life.

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about:

Let's say that, like Jesus in today's gospel story,  
you wake up early some morning,  
before anyone else in the house.

You can't get back to sleep,  
so you slip out of bed.

You feel the touch of carpet on the soles of your feet.  
You try not to wake the other family members.

You go to the kitchen

And sit down at the table.

You find yourself staring at your daughter's book bag  
and your heart goes out to her  
because you know how much she struggles to have a friend.  
She needs a friend,  
but there is little that you can do to help her.

The room around you is silent.  
And it is there, in that silence,  
that you touch something of the truth...a truth about yourself  
the truth that connects to your daughter  
and your love for her...

a deep truth about your life  
that only silence,  
and the solitude that comes with silence,  
can convey.

Maybe, at that point, you get up and go into the living room.  
You look at the framed picture hung upon the wall:

- Your wedding day.
- Your parents.
- A son in a football jersey.

The pictures are silent, but they speak a truth that is loud and clear...  
a core truth about that which is most important to you...

the truth of who you  
and who God created to be...

It's all there,  
set within those frames...  
all the love and grace that you have received  
along with all the suffering and the sacrifices you have made  
in the name of love,  
in the name of **God**...whose deepest name is **Love**.

...

This is the truth that waits for you  
on a weekday morning  
in the sacred silence of a suburban house;  
the truth that waits to reveal itself  
of the silence of the prayer called solitude.

The truth of who you are in this world  
and truth of who you are in God.

It's there in the solitude.

You sense it in the beating of your heart;  
You feel it in the warmth of your skin.

The "you" you are to yourself.  
The "you" you are to God.

\* \* \*

You look toward,  
and the dark sky is growing light.

Soon a new day and its duties  
will press in.

Soon your family will be awake.  
The phone will ring  
and someone will turn on the TV.  
But you, you will have touched a deep truth,  
a truth that is deeper than  
the schedule and work of a busy day.

...

Friends, we can't live without this type of prayer.

And the reason is simple:  
We can't live without the truth...

the truth of who we are  
in the silence before dawn;  
the truth of who we are  
in the silence of God.