

Wednesday's Gospel: Rising Early to Pray

Gospel for Wednesday in the 1st Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 1:29-39*)

And Jesus left the synagogue, and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told him of her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or

possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And he healed 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.

And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him pursued him, and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out.” And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Commentary

Our Lord travels through the fields and towns of Galilee announcing his message, healing the sick and casting out demons. It is a demanding work, since so many people are coming to him to make known their needs. The apostles, who have been accompanying our Lord for just a short time, cannot help but be amazed: Everyone is looking for you!

In the midst of all this activity, Saint Mark recounts, as if in passing, a small detail that, when looked at closely, turns out to be the key to understanding where our Lord drew the strength to carry out his mission. We read: “in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed.”

Jesus had the strength to reach all the “peripheries” of Galilee because he sought dialogue with his Father, despite the effort this entailed. Thus

we are shown the close interconnection between announcing the Gospel message and a life of prayer.

It is in prayer where we always discover anew the authentic foundation of our Christian life, where we find our center and are able to rise above the temptation to rushing about, to superficiality and activism.

Saint Mark thus shows us two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, that we are invited to follow our Lord's example of an intense activity of evangelization, willing to sacrifice ourselves for the good of the people close to us, and on the other, that we should never forget that our strength is on loan and therefore we need to seek it in our heartfelt dialogue with God.

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