

FR HUGH'S HOMILY FOR 5th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

“It was the evening of the 24th...” Back in the 50s and early 60s there was a TV series on Crime where Edgar Lustgarten would introduce the crime story looking very sinister (black and white TV of course) and saying something like is. It was always a date and a place. (The phrase became a cult item later and appeared in pop songs and The Rocky Horror Show.)

Time and place can be the clue to the matter in hand, as old Edgar knew.

In the gospel story today, like last week the place, a synagogue, was important, and today it is also the time.

When Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum, healing, the outrageous thing to many was that it was the Sabbath and forbidden by the Law. In our gospel now, Jesus steps out to the synagogue and goes over to Simon's family house, and again heals, now Simon's mother-in-law, regardless of the day, that it is forbidden by Sabbath rules.

But then evenings falls. Suddenly as the Sabbath ends and the restrictions are over, suddenly everyone rushes to bring their sick relatives to him. So through the evening and night he is caring for them.

Then as they drift away, Jesus has to rest, and so goes off to find peace.

But where does he find peace and what does he do with it? To a lonely place, probably high up, as that is often where meetings with his Father take place. What he does with it is to pray? It is a time of rest in prayer.

Prayer for him, like us, is simply time spent with God. But he has to find that quiet space to rejuvenate and find strength in his Father. A meeting of the two of them together.

Jesus does not care about the Sabbath, as a law, when he doesn't want to. Which marks him out from every other Jew. Of course some Jews just ignore all the religious rules, they have given upon their faith, but this is not Jesus.

What has happened now is that the Sabbath is no longer a time of the week, but Jesus is himself the Sabbath, the is the Law.

The Sabbath is time to set aside for God. To be with Jesus is the time and the space spent with God. The thing that is significant is the quiet needed. Jesus gives us his example of this in that lonely space.

Prayer: to find Jesus in a space and time where we can be with God, with him.

What breaks Jesus out of his time with his Father is that the people need him. ‘Everybody is looking for you.’ The care of others. So Jesus begins again to journey further afield to care for others both physically and spiritually.

There is a very gentle story here too. Jesus sees Simon's worry for for his mother-in-law and goes straight to her. Sometimes people say, ‘Well it is typical of the men that she has just got out of bed and then they expect her to serve them.’ There may be something in that.

But what it is saying to us is something deeper. It says in Greek that Jesus raises her from her bed, using exactly the same word that is used for the resurrection. A particular word.

When she serves them the word to serve is diakonia, the word used for diaconal service.

There is a relationship being described here where in lifting her back into life, a form of resurrection, in healing her, she in turn responds by service to the Lord and others.

As will run all through the gospel, prayer, attachment to God, Sabbath time, and then living out what we receive from him, responding to time with God in service, is the Christian path.

This is what we say at the end of Mass. Having met with God in Communion, then ‘go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,’ or ‘go and announce the gospel of the Lord.’ Raised up in meeting him intimately in the Mass and then serving him with our lives.