

Clearing a Path through our Demons

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 1: 29-39

These may seem like three unrelated passages,
or, at least, three happenings with far too abrupt transitions.
We go from the late-morning incident with Simon's mother-in law
abruptly to the post-sunset gathering of the whole town outside the door
abruptly to the pre-dawn departure to the deserted place
abruptly to Jesus preaching throughout the whole of Galilee.
It feels terribly rushed, and too scant in detail.

Why not a richer story with more to envision (like "The Shack")?

We know that so much more happened and was said.

Indeed, John, at the very end of his gospel, says,

**"There are also many other things that Jesus did,
but if these were to be described individually,
I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written."**

Hmmm.

When we read passages like this, where historical accuracy may be questioned,
(indeed there were no play-by-play commentators),

and where we may feel that we are not given enough detail,

we should really be "un-phased", for history is not our purpose in faith.

There is a history, but "*hearing*" *God is our purpose*.

We believe that God speaks to us, today,

and that He speaks to us in a special way through these texts (not to exclude others).

The Scriptures are not simply God *having spoken*,

and we are to now do our best to "get it".

We believe that God speaks to us today.

"Let him who has ears hear" Jesus says repeatedly—to *us*.

The brevity of these passages in fact underscores haste.

And, as we have stated before, *haste characterizes love*.

Jesus is seemingly sometimes in a hurry because he loves,

not because efficiency is the name of the game.

Jesus moving in hurried fashion is not, therefore,

Jesus rushing things, and cutting corners in his interaction.

Jesus always gives what is needed,

and, whenever there is an open heart, there is a real connection.

The Scriptures actually need not give much detail to be rich.
Let us simply consider the first of these three incidents.
We have more than enough here to discover and of which to be in awe.
Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, arrives at the house of Simon, in Capernaum,
where Simon was living with his mother-in-law.
Simon was married. The first Pope was married.
Moreover, Saint Clement of Alexandria (+215) makes the claim that Simon had children.
He also says that Simon's wife suffered martyrdom.
We do not know: the ancient Christian literature is otherwise silent on these two matters.

Now, apparently, the mother-in-law was a big deal to Simon.
All three synoptic evangelists make mention of it.
And, consequently, we could perhaps venture to infer that this incident
—at least initially—caused a rift between Simon and Jesus.
Simon was not pleased that the mother-in-law—*not* living in separate quarters
—had been healed and would be staying even longer... oops.
Regardless, Jesus arrives and is informed immediately of the mother-in-law's fever.
Notice the *deliberateness* of action.

“He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up.”

Notice the *effectiveness* of action.

“Then the fever left her.”

Notice the *fruitfulness* of action.

“She waited on them.”

This is truly moving.
Jesus goes directly to Simon's mother-in-law.
There is no introduction.
He grasps her hand, an intimate gesture, in silence.
Through the gesture, he communicates strength, enabling her to do
what her illness was making it difficult to do: *stand*.
As she finds her footing, the fever leaves her.
Then, without missing a heartbeat, she waits on them.
I do not know about you, but I would have wanted a transition period.
“OK people, this is awesome; I will be back in a little while.”

I would have needed to

- make sure I was truly well
- re-group psychologically
- shower and change clothes

She, instead, immediately waits on them.

Hmmm: haste characterizes love...

She is not simply healed in her body.

She is touched in her heart.

She is awakened and moved beyond herself.

She communicates what she had received.

Such is the fruitfulness that Jesus so wishes to see in us, and so brings joy to God.

Jesus pours into us divine love which

- lifts us
- heals us
- enables us to serve with a generosity we may think impossible

This poses some questions for each of us:

- Do we believe that Jesus can reach us in our “bed of misery” and heal us?
- Do we let God grasp us by the hand and help us to our feet?
- Do we choose to share the love we have received, and “wait on others”?

We are given a love we cannot fathom.

We are not here to fulfill some legal obligation.

We are not here to appease anyone or anything.

We are here to be flooded with love

—as unworthy and as indifferent as we may sometimes be.

Today is our day of lifting and healing and opening of our hearts...

Let us again be in awe.