



MORNING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2020

Readings: Exodus 31; Matthew 26:31-56; Psalm 59

“You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you... Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord...” (Exodus 31:14a, 15a)

This command to keep the Sabbath comes after voluminous directions on how to build the Temple, as well as the assignment of specific skilled craftsmen to get the job done. It is an interesting pause, a reminder of the need for intentional and focused rest. As important as the Temple was, as fastidious as the directions were, the Lord told Moses, “Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you” (verse 13, emphasis mine).

In verse 14 we see the keeping of the Sabbath because it is “holy for you.” In verse 15 we read that the Sabbath is to be kept because it is “holy to the Lord.” This day of days, this special observance of deliberate and solemn rest, is the binding experience between God and us. In the Sabbath, we come into communion with the Father, for this day is holy, set apart, both for us and for Him.

Our world is being forced into a pause, a time of separation, a “Sabbath” of sorts.

We are all so trained to be busy, to fill our calendars with “stuff,” to be important to ourselves and to others, that these days are somewhat unnerving. What do we do with our time? How can we continue to see ourselves as important? Where is the source of our ultimate value and worth? So we create new lists to supplant the old ones: instead of time at the office, a calendar filled with appointments and all sorts of “important” things we must

accomplish, we now create a new list: clean out the closets, re-organize the garage, fertilize the lawn, wash the car, etc., etc., etc.

Now, these things are not bad in themselves. I have my own “to-do” list. But I wonder if God may have something else in store for us in these trying times? I remember giving my spiritual director my various accomplishments and “to-do’s” that encompassed my life. They often made me feel very good about myself, very important; but again, if I did not accomplish my list for the day, and that went on for several days, I felt my anxiety rise, my temper get short, my self-worth diminish. Finally, he counseled me, “Don’t just do something... stand there!” This reversal of a well-known phrase caught me by surprise. I had built my

life around doing things. As a result, I had spent little time investing in what it meant to “be.” Soon after that conversation, I read Charles E. Hummel’s, *Tyranny of the Urgent*. In this little book, I came to realize a very obvious but important lesson: *Jesus was never in a hurry*. He knew what to do because He knew who He was. His being preceded His doing.

I wonder if God is giving us some time to re-think who we are. For some of us, that will be intimidating. For most of us, it will be a helpful discipline. For all of us, it has the potential to be a divine gift.

In all of the planning, the directions, the commandment and directives, the Lord said to Moses, “Above all, you shall keep my Sabbaths...” My God give us grace to invite Him into this unusual season where our focus can change... and perhaps even our lives.

– Fr. Marc

