**5th Sunday of the Year B Final**

“A man was really struggling to know what to buy for his mother-in-law for Christmas so he decided that he would buy her a plot in the local cemetery. The next year he didn’t buy her anything for Christmas and she started to complain. His reply was that unless you use what I bought you last year how will I buy something new this year? As we look at this passage today we see that Simon wasn’t that kind of son in law, he cared for his wife and her family. Simon’s mother in law had a close encounter of Jesus and was healed of a fever and returned to full health. This led on to many more healings in the town of Capernaum.

The gospel passage of today describes the busy schedule of Jesus as his public ministry gathers momentum. The story picks up from where we left him in the gospel text of last Sunday – it was a Sabbath and Jesus was in a synagogue where “he taught them with authority” and cured a man possessed by an unclean spirit. So here is what follows: Jesus leaves the synagogue; enters Peter’s house, cures Simon’s mother-in-law; has a meal there. Then in the evening he is busy engaging with those who were sick and those who were possessed, and the whole town that came to him. This must have happened after sunset, because it was a Sabbath day. It is not clear at what time he went to bed, but he did go to bed. But “long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.” Simon and his companions go in search of him, when they find him Jesus decides to move on to other towns. He was indeed busy. Was He restless? It doesn’t seem so!

The contemporary culture forces us to be busy. The more you are urbanised, the more you are likely to be busy. We keep inventing machines to save time, and yet we keep complaining all the time: there is no time! Whether our time is spent productively or not, we are simply busy. We are busy checking emails. We are busy talking on the phone. We are busy twittering. When we are not busy, actually we are busy planning how to be busy. Are you a busy person? How do you feel about your busy-ness? Do you feel restless? Or, do you feel engaged? How can we give meaning to our busy-ness? How does Jesus handle his busy schedule – even in the gospel story of today? Jesus is busy, alright. But he does not create a picture of being restless, but engaged. What do I mean? I find three important aspects that provide meaning and gratification to what Jesus is busy with.

**1. He is engaged in enhancing the life of people around**

Evidence from several research projects in contemporary psychology suggests that happiness (that is, gratification) and life-satisfaction are highly correlated to being engaged in the lives of other people. Even, sense of purpose is seen as being engaged with something larger than oneself. For those engaged in altruistic activity time passes swiftly, bringing much satisfaction and hope. It provides the reason for them to wake up every morning. This is what Jesus is busy with. He is busy enhancing the lives of people around him. This becomes the sign of the messianic times. This is how he brings in the Kingdom of God. This is the Good News (Mk 1:14). In some professions, work itself might involve direct interaction with people more than others. But, may be you are working in a garage turning nuts of cars eight hours a day! May be you are busy with numbers in your accounting department? May be you are on a driving wheel most of your working hours? But are there not people at the receiving end of most of these activities? Besides the ‘clients’, there is perhaps your family and dear ones. And on another level: there may be a possibility to enjoy special gratification in voluntary work. Ultimately, there is no substitute for quality, physical time spent with people – friends and family. They provide meaning to our busy-ness.

**2. Seeking popularity or inner gratification?**

The first point was about the external purpose of my being busy, but the second aspect is about internal motivation. Why do I do what I do the whole day? One motivation could be that we want to be recognised, to be praised, and to be acclaimed. We want to become popular. But for Jesus, popularity was not on his agenda. In fact, the gospel text of today tells us after all that he did by way of curing people and casting out devils, “he would not allow them to speak…” (Mk 1:34). Jesus did not want a ‘celebrity cult’ around him.

Our own being busy could be led by a motivation – applause from others. And when we don’t get that praise and honour, we get easily discouraged. On the other hand, if we do what we do out of an intrinsic motivation – that I simply enjoy doing it – then we keep working. We might become busy, but we know where to draw the line. We are detached from the external fruits of the work. We are able to time off! We are free.

**3. Taking the Me-Time with God**

And this is the third aspect that we see in the busy-ness of Jesus. “In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.” Jesus spends quality me-time with God. It is time to relive his Abba-experience (Mk 1:11).

We too need this me-time with God. It is time to re-energise our batteries. Actually, that time of silence and prayer is also a time to enjoy the inner fruits of our work. It is time to purify our intentions. It is time to remind ourselves why we do what we do. Yes, it is for our family, for people around us. But it is actually even more than that.

In the 2nd reading of today, St Paul tells us why he is busy preaching the Good News: “I do not boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me” (1Cor 9:16). He preaches not for praise of others, not for any pay, but the reward is internal – it is “to have a share in the blessings of the gospel” (1Cor 9:23). That is it.

Yes, we are busy doing what we do for the glory of God. To allow the life of God to flow in us! When there is the higher motivation of the glory of God, everything falls in place. We are no more restless. We are engaged – with others and God!