

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time February 7, 2021

Have you ever had the experience of losing a child in a public place? The panic that rises up in you when for an awful moment or two, you think of the worst-case scenario possible. We lost a daughter in a Woolco store (yes, I am dating myself), and we were sure she had run outside the store. Staff who were quick to respond to our situation, locked all the exterior doors as a safety precaution just in case someone had taken our child and was still in the store. Fortunately, said daughter was not lost but hiding in amongst a circular rack of clothing amused by all the fuss being made to find her. She did not stay amused for long when she saw how upset we were! Now, she was too frightened to come out. We questioned her as to why she would stay hidden when everyone was searching for her. As parents, we always instructed our children, if they got lost, just to stay put and we would find them. This is exactly what she did!

In today's Gospel reading, everyone is searching for Jesus. Jesus has left the house in the early morning while it is still very dark, to go off to a deserted place to pray. Jesus must have found a really secluded spot because his companions had to hunt to find him! How long was Jesus in this deserted place praying? A couple of hours perhaps?

Jesus has gone public with his ministry and so many are seeking him out. "That evening, at sunset, they brought to Jesus all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door." Can you imagine, just as Jesus was getting ready for a rest as the sun set, the whole city gathered at the door to watch Jesus heal, cure and drive out demons! I wonder how long this took to do? And yet, Jesus got up while still very dark to go and pray. I am thinking Jesus did not get much sleep!

The significance of how long Jesus spent in prayer is not lost on me. There are many times that I need solitude and time to pray by myself. In fact, there are many days I wish I could make more time for prayer. I guess this is why Jesus got up in the middle of the night to go and pray in a deserted place. Food for thought. On those sleepless nights, get up and go to a place to spend time with Jesus in prayer. Yes, it is hard to get away to pray when everyone is searching for you!

When the disciples found Jesus, "He answered, Let us go to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." Yes, proclaiming the message is what he came out to do.

The connection for me is clear. I am called out to proclaim the message too. To be able to proclaim the message, I need to spend lots of time in prayer. The time spent in solitude helps me hear what God wants for me. Time spent in solitude with God is not time spent alone. My personal prayer mantra is, "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10). I take this to heart. I pray it to rid my mind of distractions. Yes, be still and come to know God!

Reflection by Julie de Gouw, Pastoral Minister