

## 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

### GOSPEL

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On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with fever, and they told him about her straight away. He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding around the door, and he cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; he also cast out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was.

In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him, they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came.' And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils.

(Mark 1:29–39)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- In Capernaum, archaeological excavations have uncovered a house, close by the synagogue, which has ancient inscriptions suggesting it is the house of Peter.
- Capernaum was a thriving town and was a centre for the local fishing industry.
- The Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and lasts until sunset on Saturday. As the day of God's rest, work was not permitted. That is why Jesus only begins his work of healing after sunset.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

In touching Simon's mother-in-law and then allowing her to serve him, Jesus is breaking down traditional barriers. He brings wholeness and holiness to her by his presence. The kingdom of God cannot tolerate prejudice and taboo, just as sickness and evil have no place in the kingdom.

This text shows us a typical day for Jesus—the first of his ministry. He listens to the Word of God, then worships with his community; he relaxes in the home of a friend; he pursues his work of healing and preaching and, before dawn, he withdraws alone to develop his relationship with the Father through prayer. There is a wonderful pattern of balance here between prayer, work and rest.

When the disciples find him, they want him to return to Capernaum to the acclaim he is receiving. Instead, Jesus insists that the boundaries of the kingdom be pushed out. The kingdom of God must reach further and further. It is for this that he came!

- How is the balance in your life?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'Jesus took her by the hand and helped her up.' Who has taken you by the hand and helped you when you needed it? What would you like Jesus to help you with?
- Reflect on and then share your experiences of a time in your life when you felt empty or desolate; when you were gripped by a 'demon' you could not shake. By contrast, describe other times when life was full of promise and satisfying.
- Make a special effort this week to extend a helping hand to someone in need. If you know someone who is gripped by some 'demon', offer them a word of encouragement.
- In quiet moments alone this week, recite the response to the psalm:

*Praise the Lord who heals the broken hearted.*

