

**FIFTH SUNDAY - B - FEBRUARY 8, 2015**

**INTRO: I HOPE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO READ THE COVER STORY IN PARADE MAGAZINE FOR JANUARY 11, 2015**

**THE #1 HEALTH-BOOSTER IN 2015**

**POLITICIANS, CHILDREN AND CELEBRITIES ARE DOING IT?**

**SHOULDN'T YOU?**

**THE ARTICLE SAYS THAT "THE HOTTEST WELL-BEING TREND RIGHT NOW ISN'T A HARDCORE WORKOUT OR A FAD DIET. IT'S A GENTLE, ANCIENT PRACTICE THAT MILLIONS SAY IS THE ANTIDOTE TO THE 21ST CENTURY STRESS THAT AFFECTS EVERYTHING FROM JOB PERFORMANCE AND SLEEP TO YOUR WEIGHT"**

**MEDITATION "LOOKS LIKE YOU AREN'T DOING ANYTHING, BUT WHEN WE WATCH THE BRAIN IN THESE STUDIES, WE SEE DIFFERENT PARTS LIGHTING UP AND ACTIVATING...." AND SOME DECREASING**

**"YOU CAN LITERALLY CHANGE YOUR BRAIN THROUGH THE PRACTICE" RESEARCH SHOWS THAT MEDITATION INCREASES GRAY MATTER IN BRAIN AREAS ASSOCIATED WITH LEARNING, MEMORY.....**

**MOST INTERESTING COMPASSION.....**

**AND A DECREASE IN THE PART OF THE BRAIN LINKED TO ANXIETY AND STRESS....**

**SO, IT IS NO SURPRISE IS IT, THAT IN TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY FROM MARK WE HEAR ABOUT JESUS RISING VERY EARLY BEFORE DAWN, LEAVING AND GOING OFF TO A DESERTED PLACE WHERE HE PRAYED....**

*NO SURPRISE BECAUSE THE PREVIOUS DAY HAD BEEN QUITE  
CHALLENGING....*

*REMEMBER - HEALING PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW AS WELL AS THOSE  
WHO WERE BROUGHT TO HIM WHO WERE ILL OR POSSESSED BY  
DEMONS....*

*"AND THE WHOLE TOWN WAS GATHERED AT THE DOOR...."*

*THAT'S GOT TO BE STRESSFUL....*

*WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE WHOLE TOWN IS GATHERED AT YOUR  
DOOR?*

*AND IT DOES HAPPEN DOESN'T IT? YOU FEEL LIKE THE WHOLE TOWN IS  
GATHERED AT YOUR DOOR.....*

*EVERYONE WANTS A PIECE OF YOU.....*

*PERHAPS AS A PARENT.....*

*OR A TEACHER, A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL*

*WHATEVER YOUR SITUATION IN LIFE...YOUR EMPLOYMENT*

*THERE ARE INEVITABLY DEMANDS AND CHALLENGES.....*

*AND SO OFTEN, IT KEEPS HAPPENING, DAY AFTER DAY.....*

*WHEN DO YOU "RISE EARLY BEFORE DAWN AND LEAVE - JUST*

*LEAVE AND GO OFF TO A DESERTED PLACE WHERE YOU CAN PRAY..."*

*OF COURSE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO LITERALLY RISE EARLY BEFORE  
DAWN AND LITERALLY GO OFF TO A DESERTED PLACE.....*

*BUT YOU DO SOMEHOW HAVE TO ESCAPE FOR AT LEAST A FEW  
MINUTES....*

*PERHAPS TO YOUR OWN SPECIAL, PRIVATE, PERSONAL PLACE, OR A  
WALK IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD - IF YOU CAN ENTER NATURE - ALL THE  
BETTER.....*

*E.G. I WAS JUST TALKING TO SOMEONE THE OTHER DAY WHO SAID WHEN  
THEY ARE FEELING BAD, STRESSED, IF THEY CAN TAKE A WALK OUT IN  
THE NEIGHBORHOOD, IN NATURE.....THEYD BEGIN TO FEEL BETTER...  
WHICH, OF COURSE, IS DIFFICULT THESE FEBRUARY DAYS WHEN WE  
ARE LIKELY TO BE SUFFERING FROM CABIN FEVER...*

*BUT IT MAKES THOSE ESCAPE MOMENTS ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT...*

*E.G. WHEN I'M ON AN ELEVATOR ALONE - FOR ME IS A GREAT TIME -  
TO TAKE A DEEP PRAYERFUL BREATH IN AND OUT.....E.G. RECPLEX*

*BREATHE IN OPEN TO THE SPIRIT - BREATH OUT - LETTING GO OF MY  
CONCERNS AND ANXIETIES....*

*E.G. STOPPING AT A RED LIGHT*

*HOPEFULLY 10 MIN. AT LEAST IN THE AM AND 10 MIN. IN THE PM  
THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT COMES WHEN WE HAVE THOSE "JOB  
MOMENTS" OF THE FIRST READING...*

*IS NOT MAN'S LIFE ON EARTH A DRUDGERY?  
....I HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED MONTHS OF MISERY,  
AND TROUBLED NIGHTS HAVE BEEN ALLOTTED TO ME...  
IF IN BED I SAY, "WHEN SHALL I ARISE?  
THEN THE NIGHT DRAGS ON, I AM FILLED WITH RESTLESSNESS  
UNTIL DAWN"*

*THEN THOSE MOMENTS OF PRAYER ARE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT...*

*MORE VITAL FOR OUR WELL BEING*

*IT'S ACTUALLY VERY SIMPLE.....*

*AS THE ARTICLE SAYS - IT CAN ALSO BE BENEFICIAL FOR CHILDREN*

*AS ONE TEACHER SAYS: WE'RE ALWAYS YELLING AT OUR KIDS TO PAY  
ATTENTION BUT WE NEVER TEACH THEM HOW TO PAY ATTENTION.*

*THAT'S WHERE MINDFULNESS/MEDITATION COMES IN.....*

*AT RISK CHILDREN IN BALTIMORE WERE BETTER ABLE TO HANDLE  
CHRONIC STRESS, EXPERIENCED FEWER EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS AND  
HAD LESS ONGOING ANXIETY*

*AND HELPFUL FOR TEACHERS TOO....*

*JUST BECOMING AWARE OF OUR BREATHING IN AND OUT....*

*SLOWING DOWN....*

*REPEATING A PRAYER PHRASE, OVER AND OVER....*

*E.G. COME HOLY SPIRIT*

*OPENING OURSELVES TO THE TRANSCENDENT, TO THE SPIRIT...*

*GIVES US HOPE....CAN INCREASE OUR COMPASSION*

*ALLOWING US TO LET GO OF OUR CYNICISM, OUR PAIN, OUR SUFFERING,  
OUR DESPAIR.....*

*TO LET GO OF THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS IN OUR LIVES...*

*WHICH WE TAKE ON.....THEIR PAIN AND HURT....*

*ENABLING US TO BECOME PEOPLE OF HOPE, PEOPLE OF HEALING,  
PEOPLE OF COMPASSION.....FREER AND LIGHTER...*

*WHEN WE DO THAT ON A REGULAR BASIS IT ALLOWS US TO PARTICIPATE  
IN THIS EUCHARIST IN A FULLER RICHER MANNER....*

*HELPS US TO BE MORE COMPASSIONATE....MORE RELAXED...*

*SO THAT THIS EUCHARIST CAN BRING ABOUT WHAT IT SIGNIFIES....*

*THIS EUCHARIST IS BOTH A GIFT OF GOD BESTOWS ON US AS HIS PEOPLE  
BUT ALSO A GIFT POINTING TO WHAT WE ARE TO BECOME...*

*IT IS NOT MEANT TO BE A PRIVATE AFFAIR.....*

*IT IS A GIFT OF MEANT TO DRAW ALL OF US ASSEMBLED HERE INTO  
COMMUNION.....*

*AND EVENTUALLY BRING THE PEOPLE OF ALL PLACES AND ALL TIMES  
INTO COMMUNION.*

*OUR GOD MAKES HIMSELF ONE WITH US IN CHRIST SO THAT WE MAY  
BECOME ONE WITH EACH OTHER IN HIM.....*

*LET US PRAY THAT WE MIGHT BECOME MORECOMPASSIONATE PEOPLE -  
BOTH THRU OUR PERSONAL MEDITATION/PRAY AND THIS EUCHARIST....*

*WE MAY TRULY BECOME THE PEOPLE GOD CALLS US TO BE....*

*LET US TOGETHER TAKE A MOMENT AND FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE  
EXPERIENCE A LITTLE SAMPLE OF MEDITATION/MINDFULNESS....*

*FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE....*

*YOU MAY CLOSE YOUR EYES OR NOT....*

*BUT NOTICE FOR A MOMENT YOUR BREATH....IN AND OUT....*

*IN AND OUT.....COME, HOLY SPIRIT...COME....*

*AMEN....*

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