

Finding Time for Prayer Amidst a Busy Life

If all goes well, I should be able to finally hit the road in a month for a road trip to Banff and Jasper National Parks in Canada. I'm looking forward to meeting up with a photographer friend, but what I love the most about these places is the incredible tranquility and peace. Yes, there are tons of tourists - but if you get up at 3:30 a.m. to make it to a spot for sunrise you have a lot of quiet and alone spots. There's also plenty of places where people are spread out, and you just feel the incredible presence of God in these places of beauty.

Finding a deserted place is important for our well being, and our spirituality. And it shouldn't just be a couple of times a year, rather it should be daily. This is where, like Saint Mary whom we meet in the Gospel, we can listen to the Lord.

By this, I'm referring to trying to find time daily for both downtime and prayer. So in our busy lives, what can we do to make sure that we are both Saint Mary and Saint Martha? For we need to listen, but then also get to work too.

For one, make prayer a regular part of your day. It doesn't have to be an hour, or a half hour, or even 15 minutes - but getting into the habit can do so much for the soul. I try to get a little exercise in daily and I notice it as it helps me feel more alert throughout the day. With respect to prayer, I made a commitment to pray the Liturgy of the Hours when I was ordained a transitional deacon, so it's obligatory. Prayer may not be obligatory for most outside of coming to Mass on the weekend, but it is important. After all we don't just show our love one hour out of the week to those in our family. Consider some prayer as you get up, or before going to bed. Consider praying as a family. Or even pray in the car.

Second, consider experimenting with different kinds of prayer. It's good to use what works, but there are many ways to pray. It can be prayer from the heart; familiar prayers like the rosary or Lord's Prayer; silence and meditation are also types of prayer. As you pray, try too to not just ask for things - intercessory prayer is good, but we should also be thankful for things. Sometimes we forget how blessed we are.

Third, more on that silence component: remember you don't have to do anything. Saint Mary was listening to Jesus speak, and represents the contemplative side of our spirituality. Some of the early saints were people who just went off to the desert or to a mountain to live alone and be closer to God; and there are still many hermits in the Church. Sometimes just sitting in silence in Church, or going for a walk or even just sitting in your yard can give you time to let God do the talking while you do the listening. A big reason I enjoy trips to national parks is that such places bring me closer to God as I gaze at the sky and mountains during sunrise or sunset or see a million stars come out.

Finally, try to have balance. I remember at my first parish, the pastor mentioned to me how interesting it was that so many of the kids were coming to Mass in sports uniforms. There's nothing at all wrong with activities and sports on weekends. But sometimes kids

and adults can be so stressed. Having to feel college-ready at the age of 8. Being involved in a million youth sporting events and activities. And so many school things going on not to mention things mom and dad are involved in. We should not be so busy that we have to find out what people in our house are up to via social media. Try to make time for your family; maybe have a family movie night or game night. Don't feel guilty for saying "we're too busy" or just having some downtime. And coupled with that, try to be attentive if you have kids to their schedules, making sure they are not overburdened but have time for rest and play.

While I love being a priest, so helpful to me is being able to visit family, or to enjoy my day off and go to a local park reserve, and those times during the year when I can get away for a road trip. But even at the end of the day when I'm praying, or just taking Emmett for a walk or tossing him the ball with his dog friends, or spending some time in prayer, it does so much to help me grow closer to God, and to live out my vocation. Hopefully no matter how busy you are, you too can find those deserted places so you can emerge from them to better complete the mission. Saints Mary and Martha pray for us.

Blessings,
Fr. Paul