

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jan 19th 2017**

I grew up as the mother of five, 8 years apart oldest to youngest, and the supervisory curator of an assortment of the usual menagerie of cats and dogs, hamsters and guinea pigs. And the unusual assortment of small green snakes, lizards, bearded dragons and one large iguana, who did not like being on a leash! Had I known this was to be my defining educational environment – not the four years of undergraduate study. I thrived on academics. My studies were designed to terminate in a professional career including travel, romance and adventure! Through it all I had a place to go when things were too much. The library.

When our children were young, I woke up often to not one, but many demands that needed immediate attention: diapers to change, infant to nurse, shoes to tie, breakfast to prepare – all to the tune of “where’s my backpack?”, “Where did you put my sweater?” “I don’t like jelly with my peanut butter”. In a flash, several were out the door in a flurry of pecks on cheeks, shoulder squeezes, trailed by enthusiastic encouragements -“have a good day!”, “good luck on your test!” and “love you!”.

A deep breath while small hands cheerfully waved good-by as the school bus drove off. Days were hectic, some very long. Runny noses, skinned knees, occasional broken bone, a snake on the loose, gentle requests, “please Mommy, help me”, frustrated cries “I need you right now!” “This homework is too hard.” Day’s weariness, “what’s for dinner?”. Sleepy pleas, “just one more story, pleeeeeease?” Bedtime never came too soon, while morning often did. Youngest son John voiced my sentiments, “I slept too fast!” There were times when I would confront God with the truth - a grave mistake had been made. I should be out there with mother Theresa tending to the dying, not here with 5 kids with constant needs and demands. Years later, I now refer to this time as the “reign of holy chaos.”

We hear in today’s reading that Jesus, even Jesus, needed to get away. Where did he go? Jesus found peace and refreshment in the familiar, in the midst of his hectic, chaotic life – in a boat on the water. Most likely a fishing boat. Some of Jesus’ closest friends were fishermen. Pretty safe bet that Jesus loved being on or near the water.

What about you? Me? Where did I experience God’s refreshment in my hectic life? At one time, the library. In my growing-up years, of all places – hanging laundry outside on the clothesline. Hot or cold, rain or snow I hung clothes outside! I loved it. I was drawn to it. A routine task offered me time and disposition to be present to God’s refreshing presences. After just minutes alone, yet not alone, I went back inside renewed and refreshed to sooth the little one pulling on my skirt, read to the one dragging a book bigger than she, sit on the floor building blocks, playing “dolls”, “house”, “school” or “construction man”. Picnics – even in the snow!!

A place of refreshment in the evening was in the kitchen washing dishes. I loved every aspect of it. I was drawn to it. Again alone, yet not alone. Jesus enters gently where children hesitate to go. (They fear being asked to help. Jesus is a hands-on sort of fellow.)

It took me a long time to learn that prayer – often my unspoken and unrecognized desire for God, for the gentle, comforting, refreshing presences of Jesus is to be had in the midst of my daily life.

Everyday when Jim got home from work he asked, “what exciting happened today?” Something really exciting had happen only I did not know it at the time.

The Good News: Something exciting happens every day to each one of us – Jesus knows my need for refreshment and offers it in some way. Where in my day am I refreshed with God?

Joan Howard-Creighton University's Christian Spirituality Program (Retired)