

16 (B)

A man was caught in a snow blizzard in Alaska. His truck left the road, and he ended up a long way from the main highway. It was getting dark and it seemed pointless to walk through the snow to seek help, so he decided to await the morning light before taking any action. When he woke up in the morning his truck was completely frozen shut and covered in snow. It took six days before he was spotted and rescued. When he was rescued he was asked what he did during those six long days. He replied with total seriousness. 'I did an awful lot of thinking and praying.'

It's good for all of us to reserve some quiet time each day or each week for quiet reflection on the direction our lives are taking us or on how we are living them in the light of the Gospel. Maybe Jesus had that in mind when he said to the apostles; 'come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest awhile'.

Over the next few weeks lots of people will spend time away with family or friends. Many will head abroad. Sad to say, several chase the sun and the sand more to indulge their bodies rather than refresh their souls. As the psalm today says: 'he leads me beside restful waters to revive my drooping spirit'. But those restful waters refer more to an inner stillness rather than an actual place. Jesus said: 'when you pray, go to your private room and pray to your Father, who is in that secret place'? Your 'private room', your 'secret place' refers to the inner dispositions of your heart before almighty God rather than an actual place.

Perhaps many people would not see this as all that important – some might even regard it as a waste of time. Those same people might, however, think nothing of being glued to the telly all night without a hint of guilt. Where do our priorities lie?

A young priest once asked Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta how he might become a better priest. She said just two things - 'don't do or say anything which would deliberately displease our Lord and spend some time each day in prayer before our lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Activism or being busy is often seen by this generation as a commendable quality but it may be little more than a smokescreen for our unwillingness to move beyond the material to the transcendent. The world would want us to keep silent about God and have us see prayer as a waste of valuable time. Extending shopping hours on Sunday which the Government is proposing is another example of denying our spiritual side by turning the Lord's Day (Sunday) into just another weekday.

Unlike Jesus and the apostles, perhaps we cannot go away to a lonely place but God is everywhere and a quiet time spent with Him is not beyond the bounds of possibility for even the busiest person. If we're too busy to pray then we are too busy. As always, the choice is ours.