

‘you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol’ Exodus 20:3.4a

“Prayer is my refuge and my sanctuary. To talk with God is to return to a place in the heart where one is understood fully and deeply. To seek a place to pray is to find the place of stillness. Everyone leads such a life of busyness that stillness is always lacking. No wonder then that prayer has no place. It is this need for a solitary place that enables me to leave paces in my life open, to not overbook myself. Life is not something that should always be scheduled. And what calendar can contain one’s relationship to the divine? “ ~ Bell Hooks, Wounds of Passion

I confess that the most serious temptation to idolatry I am aware of in myself is to make an idol of my schedule, placing it above and before time spent with God. I don’t think this is a temptation peculiar to pastors or Christian workers. But we do have the built in excuse of seeing our schedules as “The Lord’s work”.

In the passage quoted above, Bell Hooks eloquently explains why this is a serious mistake. I so desperately need open spaces in my life where God can meet me, often in stillness and silence, to reassure me of His love, peace, mercy and grace. If I am too busy to leave that space for God then I become like the guests invited to the king’s wedding banquet in Matthew 22:1-14 (this coming Sunday’s Gospel reading) who chose not to come because they had other things to do.

We are invited, over and over again, to sit down with the king at his table; to eat, drink, sing and dance with the One who calls us His beloved; to know and be known by the Creator of the universe in intimate relationship that promises to sustain us and sanctify us for His purposes. What a tragedy if we miss out on that offer because we cannot find the time or space in our schedules!

I had foolishly assumed that retirement would solve this time and space problem, this temptation to idolatry. I was wrong! Putting off time and space for God is still a “golden calf” I must contend with. Let us pray for each other, even more, let us hold each other accountable for making time and space for our relationship with the divine.

Under God’s Mercy,

Howie