

Our bulletin cover this weekend includes a reflection by Jim & Lisa Park comparing family life to a long car ride. Everything starts out exciting and upbeat, but the mood changes a lot on the trip. It's a clever metaphor, and shows that we do not always continue projects as well as we start them. We start off on our best behavior, but best behavior is hard to maintain.

Today's gospel records a very full and exciting day, Jesus' first weekend on the job. He's like a spiritual Arnold Schwarzenegger, triumphant wherever he turns. He teaches in the synagogue, expels a demon, cures a sick mother-in-law, receives the entire town at the doorstep where he heals the sick and expels demons for the rest of the day, then after a short sleep he slips out before dawn to pray alone. All on one day! When the disciples tell him people still want him, he moves on to other towns to start all over again. From the start he's at his best.

By contrast, Peter's mother-in-law isn't at the start. She has probably served others for a lifetime, but on this day she can't, due to sickness and old age. However, when Jesus cures her fever, she recaptures the enthusiasm of her youth.

Incidentally, you may be figuring out that if Peter had a mother-in-law he must have been married. That's true. That's usually how you get one. We don't hear about Peter's wife, but Paul's first letter to the Corinthians says that many of the apostles were accompanied by their wives, and he mentions Peter by name. There's also an old tradition that Peter had a daughter named Petronilla.

Anyway, my point is that often we start a project with great intentions and on our best behavior. We work hard, love hard, and play hard. That's Jesus today--at his best, working tirelessly. He also rests, but not to be waited on, nor to run away. He rests to prepare for work again. Whenever we approach our work, our family, or our faith concerned less for others, and more for ourselves, ready to gripe, pout, and ignore, it may be time to think back to the first days, or at least to Jesus' first days, and recapture that spirit that drives us into service.