

Come Away and Rest (Mark 6:30-34)

By Rev. Msgr. Kevin T. Hart

Every musician is familiar with a squiggly little symbol that appears frequently throughout a score. It's called a "rest." It tells the musician to take your hands or mouth off the instrument before continuing with the notes that follow. The rest is simply a brief and silent pause. It's akin to the punctuation marks such as a comma or a period. Just like punctuation marks in prose, a rest in music gives the composition structure and emphasis. Without a rest, what we hear would just be a monotonous series of unconnected notes.

In today's Gospel the Apostles return to Jesus, having completed their first missionary journey that we heard about in last Sunday's Gospel. They are eager to tell Jesus how successful they were and how effective were the power and authority that He had armed them with. We can imagine them breathlessly interrupting each other, trying to be the first to report to Jesus "all they had done and taught."

And how does Jesus respond? He doesn't tell them to turn right around and get back at it. No, He tells them to "come away to a deserted place and rest with me." That rest, just as in music, is a crucial part of their ministry. For without that rest with Jesus all their activity would become just busyness. And just as in music, their rest is only momentary. Upon arrival, they discover it is no longer a deserted place, but suddenly and recently populated by a vast crowd so eager to see and hear Jesus that they not only follow Him wherever He goes, but somehow manage to get there first.

Perhaps the Apostles felt slighted, cheated out of a longer rest with Jesus. But to rest with Jesus, even if only briefly, is what enables us to see the world through His eyes. The Apostles witnessed Jesus being tender and compassionate toward those who came to Him. He was "moved with pity" and by His deep love for them. And so, He begins to teach them, and to teach them at length. Perhaps that brief rest with Jesus enabled the Apostles to see them through His eyes.

Our lifestyle in the 21st century is certainly more hurried and harried than that of the Apostles in the 1st century. And so Jesus tells us, perhaps with even more urgency, to "come away and rest with me." Impossible, we think; spouses and children, working and volunteering, weighty responsibilities that surround and confound us. Busy, busy, busy. And yet, we must take the time to be with Jesus in prayer, no matter how busy life is, and no matter how briefly that rest may be.

When we rest awhile with Jesus, we are able to see our world through His eyes, and to return to our busy lives with a deeper sense of the purpose of all that busyness. And when we see our world through His eyes, we may discover that some of the things we worry so much about are really not worth it. It's that rest with Jesus that makes our life a unified "score" composed and directed not by ourselves, but by Him.

We “come away and rest” with Jesus every time we celebrate the Eucharist. But just as in music, rests come with every few bars of music. We can rest with Jesus on the Metro, on an elevator, walking the dog or walking the halls, while shaving or putting on makeup. We can rest with Jesus as we begin a meal, when we prepare for bed, while we sit and have that first cup of coffee. For it’s those brief rests with Jesus that enable us to see our world through His eyes. And even more importantly, they enable us to see ourselves as He sees us, and to unite all our responsibilities and activities into a missionary journey that He sends us on every day of our lives.

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