



Things to Ponder

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Homily – 16th Week in Ordinary Time – Mark 6:30-34

Introduction: Balancing Work and Self

This weekend's Gospel from Mark is brief, only four verses, but dramatizes the humanity of Jesus – One who cannot escape the pressing demands of the crowds who long for him. In this passage, we picture Jesus who also struggles (like us) to find a healthy balance in his life for himself and his needs (rest) – but who also finds time to serve and minister to those in need before him. *How do you balance your demands for work with your time for yourself? Is such a balance even possible?*

In Mark's Gospel, the Twelve return to Jesus after their ministering in the countryside and share their success with him. Jesus then invites them to come away from the crowds and rest. But the crowds will not give them peace. They continue to approach Jesus and them – that they don't even have time to focus and to eat. In an effort to get away, Jesus and the disciples board a boat in hopes of finding a deserted place. But the crowds notice this and arrive ahead of them. As a result, the crowds are so persistent that Jesus and his disciples cannot even find a place to be alone. Mark closes this short passage by telling us that Jesus is moved with pity and begins to teach the crowds. No rest for him! *Can you remember a time when you were totally exhausted? How did you deal with it?*

The work of Jesus and his disciples appears to have been a “round-the-clock” job! No letting up. Always on the move. Demands to be met immediately. However, Jesus saw the need to slow down, focus on self, and rest. *To pause in ministry was not a waste of time but a time for self-renewal.*

What about us today? Perhaps our zeal and commitment in being faithful disciples leaves us feeling tired and overwhelmed. In this weekend's Gospel, we hear Jesus affirm the vital importance of times of rest and renewal. A time to “recharge our batteries.” *A time to catch up with our souls!*

How and where do you recharge your batteries?

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from **the Gospel of Mark 6:30-34.**

What word or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?
What in this passage challenged you?

Further Reflections and Questions:

Clearly in this passage we see once more the balance in Jesus' busy life. He was so available to all those in need, the poor, the sick, the outcasts. But there was a limit to his availability. He knew when he needed to get away, to renew his relationship with his Father, to recharge himself. *When do you know you have reached your "availability limits?"*

"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." This is so against the grain of our modern society, where many of us feel the need to be connected by cell phone, TV ("Breaking News!"), or internet 24 hours a day. *When can you "disconnect" during your busy day?*

We are shown something important about Jesus' concern for us in today's reading. We see how aware Jesus is of the situation we often find ourselves today, pulled in all directions by the many requirements of family and work. *Where do find yourself "pulled in all directions?"*

Do not be afraid of being alone. Fear rather the opposite. As Pascal wrote, "the sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he (she) does not know how to stay quietly in his (her) room." *Do you fear being alone with yourself? Why is that?*

Making a retreat is one traditional practice of "coming away to a deserted place." In a retreat (few hours, half-day, day, few days, week), we can "drop our public masks" and just be our "real selves." *A retreat is a time to fall in love with ourselves again! Can you find a time and place to make a retreat in 2021? Or at least some time each day on your own?*

"Come away and rest awhile." Will you? Will me?

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