

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

P. O. Box 440, Whitehouse, Texas 75791

www.wellspringcommunity.net

frgusmsfs@gmail.com

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last five Sundays, our Scripture readings called us to walk in faith, be men and women of hope, nurture a confident and trusting relationship with the Lord, let that relationship become more gracious, to have courage to face the challenges that we may have to face if we choose to follow Jesus as his disciples and to listen to the voice of God and respond to that voice positively without delay. Today, we hear the call to take a break, get to a quiet place with the Lord and rest a while.

In our first reading today (Jeremiah 23:1-6), we hear Jeremiah promising his people a divine intervention – the coming of a king who would bring justice, peace, security, and salvation to his people who were like sheep without a shepherd. The responsorial Psalm (Psalm 23) sings the praises of this good shepherd whose love is steadfast and unfailing...an ever present shepherd, who will never let us slip out of his hands! The author of the second reading (Ephesians 2:13-18) declares Jesus as our peace...in him the broken covenant is renewed and reestablished. This is the fulfillment of the promise that we read in the first reading of today from Jeremiah. In Jesus the broken covenant with God is being renewed and reestablished and the kingdom of God is being proclaimed.

This was the good news that Jesus sent his disciples to proclaim. Last Sunday, we read the story of Jesus sending his twelve disciples on their mission. The scene of this Sunday's Gospel is the return of the twelve (Mark 6:30-34), overjoyed by their successes, wanting to share with their master how their day has been. Jesus invited them to "come away (with him) to a quiet place and rest awhile. People saw them leaving, guessed where they were going, and got there ahead of them. The Gospel tells us that Jesus who went with his disciples to a quiet place for rest was moved with compassion and began to minister to those who were hungry for his word.

We have much to think and pray about in this Gospel story. The first is the invitation of Jesus to a "quiet place" after a hard day's work. From the very beginning of their ministry, Jesus taught the disciples the need to be away from work and service projects, the need for time to rest, relax, pray...time for peace...time to spend with their master...to abide in him. The disciple must go from the master to fulfill the master's mission and must return to the master to be blessed, strengthened and filled again with the master's wisdom. The "busyness", the trials, the testing times, the challenges, etc. of the mission can stifle the spirit and become burdens heavy to carry. One can become so busy with the master's work that he/she forgets the master himself.

It is easy to lose focus. It is urgent to maintain focus, to be centered again and again on God and God's way.

The second thought is about Jesus trusting these men with all their inadequacies, limitations and weaknesses and sending them out to carry on his mission. On their return, they wanted to tell their master about their accomplishments. They had proclaimed the good news, cast out evil spirits, healed the sick – lots of exciting things. But Jesus did not spend time listening to their accomplishments. He told them not to give too much importance to their success. The Gospel of Luke (Luke 10:17-20) tells us that Jesus told them to find joy in being accepted into the kingdom and being called to be his disciples rather than in their accomplishments.

Just as the disciples were sent, we are sent to continue the mission of Jesus. All that we say may not be heard, all that we do may not be successful and all people may not welcome us, as Jesus told his disciples. But we must fulfill our mission and find joy in being his disciples and fulfilling his mission with all our imperfections. Nothing we do is complete or perfect. We must continue to do what we are commissioned to do trusting that "the Lord will complete what he has begun in us." (Philippians 1:6)

A third thought that should inspire us today is what happened when Jesus and the disciples went to that quiet place for their much-needed rest. In seeing the vast crowd before him, "his heart was moved with compassion for them." As the Good Shepherd, he saw his sheep hungry, thirsty, and lost and "he began to teach them many things." His rest period was interrupted, and he found an opportunity to serve. Let us follow the way Jesus and find opportunities for service in those unexpected interruptions to our rest periods and other routine activities. People don't always walk into our life at the most appropriate and convenient time. In fact, they often walk in at the most inappropriate and inconvenient time. We are challenged to be Gracious and find new opportunities to serve in these unexpected interruptions.

A fourth thought is about nurturing a deep desire for the word of God. Today's Gospel tells us that Jesus and the disciples went by boat to a deserted place for rest. But people hastened there on foot and reached ahead of them. They were hungry and thirsty for the word of Jesus. Let us be inspired and moved by their hunger and thirst and cultivate a habit of hungering and thirsting – deeply desiring - to hear the voice of God as we go about doing our daily chores. It is amazing to read about ordinary, simple people thirsting for God's word and taking the trouble to go on foot to reach the other side of the Lake ahead of Jesus and the disciples who went there by boat...that is as much as they desire to hear the word of Jesus.

I encourage you to take a few minutes each day of this week to go to a quiet place, be still and listen to the voice of God. Reflect on how much you really desire to listen to God's word and how much time actually you invest into listening to his word. Pray for a listening heart!

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 21, 2024

Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men. And he will be this all the more perfectly, the more closely he lives in communion with God in the intimacy of his own soul.
(Pope John XXIII)

Collect

Show favor, O Lord, to your servants
and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace,
that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity,
they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

No one is perfect. Our own imperfections should teach us to have a kind consideration of the faults of others and that is what forbearance means.

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Jeremiah mourned the quality of leadership among his people. The people have suffered from poor leadership. They were like sheep without a shepherd, scattered and lost. Jeremiah promised a divine intervention..... God will send someone, born of David's lineage, who will bring justice, peace, security, and salvation to his people.

The last three kings of Judah had failed to establish and maintain justice, the people suffered, and the covenantal bond was broken. Justice meant faithfulness to the demand of the

covenant. Because God is just, those who are united to God in a covenant also must be just. Leaders of Israel had failed, and the people suffered.

It is in this context that Jeremiah promised a king, whom God would send, who would shepherd God's people wisely, with love, respect, honor, and justice. The promised king would establish justice, not just for Israel, but for all.

Psalm 23

David had been a shepherd and he knew how to care for the sheep and what it cost him. He became shepherd of his people. He had to figure out how he should care for them. He knew the sheep well and now he must come to know his people, their ways, their needs, and their concerns. This problem gave him a new awareness of what God, the true shepherd, is like in his relationship to his people.

Like shepherd.... God knows his people just as they are in all their need, in their stubbornness and stupidity as well as in their value and worth. Like a shepherd...God reaches out, searches out the lost and keeps them safe. Like a shepherd.... God provides food, drink, safety, light in darkness, Grace, comfort, and strength in "dark valley moments". This Psalm proclaims the enduring, steadfast, loyal, unconquerable love of God, the good shepherd, who will never let us slip out of his hands!

**The Lord is my Shepherd;
I shall not want!
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
Beside restful waters he leads me; He refreshes my soul.**

Ephesians 2:13-18

The author of this letter says that only in Christ can we find peace and justice. Jesus is declared, "our peace...the one who can make peace.... the one in whom the good news of peace has been announced..." No political system can offer the peace and justice that Jesus offers. Through him believers will come to know God as a God of Justice and Peace. This is the fulfillment of the promise that we read in the first reading of today from Jeremiah. The broken covenant with God will be renewed and reestablished.

Mark 6:30-34

Jesus had sent out his disciples on their first mission. They returned from their mission and began to tell Jesus about their accomplishments. Jesus, gently and quietly, invited them to a

“deserted place” to rest a while. From the very beginning of their ministry, Jesus taught the disciples the need for time, away from work and service projects, the need for time to rest, relax, pray...time for peace...time to spend with their master...to abide in him. The disciple must go from the master to fulfill the master’s mission and must return to the master to be strengthened and filled again with the master’s wisdom.

The “busyness”, the trials, the testing times, the challenges, etc. of the mission can stifle the spirit and become burdens heavy to carry. One can become so busy with the master’s work that he/she can forget the master himself. It is easy to lose focus. It is urgent to maintain focus, to be centered again and again in God and God’s way.

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, July 21 - St. Lawrence of Brindisi and 9 other saints are remembered this day.

Giulio Cesare Russo was born on July 22, 1559 in Brindisi, Kingdom of Naples, to a family of Venetian merchants. After the early death of his parents, he was raised by his uncle and educated at Saint Mark's College in Venice. He joined the Capuchins in Verona as Brother Lawrence. He received further instruction from the University of Padua. An accomplished linguist, in addition to his native Italian, Lawrence could read and speak Latin, Hebrew, Greek, German, Bohemian, Spanish, and French fluently. Lawrence was ordained a priest at the age of 23.

At the age of thirty-one, Lawrence was elected superior of the Capuchin Franciscan province of Tuscany. He was appointed definitor general to Rome for the Capuchins in 1596. Pope Clement

VIII assigned him the task of preaching to the Jews in the city. He was sufficiently proficient in Hebrew that the rabbis assumed he had been a convert from Judaism. Beginning in 1599, Lawrence established Capuchin monasteries in modern Germany and Austria, furthering the Counter-Reformation and bringing many Protestants back to the Catholic faith.

In 1601, he served as the imperial chaplain for the army of Rudolph II, Holy Roman Emperor, and successfully recruited Philippe Emmanuel, Duke of Mercœur, to help fight against the Ottoman Turks. He then led the army during the brief liberation of Székesfehérvár in Hungary from the Ottoman Empire, armed only with a crucifix.

In 1602, he was elected vicar general of the Capuchin friars, at that time the highest office in the Order. He was elected again in 1605 but refused the office. He entered the service of the Holy See, becoming papal nuncio to Bavaria. After serving as nuncio to Spain, he retired to a monastery in 1618. He was recalled as a special envoy to the King of Spain regarding the actions of the Viceroy of Naples in 1619, and after finishing his mission, died on his birthday on July 22, 1619 in Lisbon.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**I believe that a simple and unassuming manner of life is best for everyone,
best both for the body and the mind.**

(Albert Einstein)

