

15th Sunday OT Year B
July 17-18, 2021

Take nothing for the journey.

Readings: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; Mark 6: 30-34

“Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” The phrase “Blue Laws” may not mean much to people today, especially if you are younger than 40 years old. But for those old enough to remember, you may have had to make a mad dash to the corner grocery store on Saturday evening to pick up milk before closing time, lest you had to wait until Monday. Most stores were closed on Sunday, and by design.

Today it seems as if it is incredibly easy to fall into an attitude about work and busyness that leaves no room for simply relaxing. “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.” Fifteen years ago this past week, a priest friend and I took just 24 hours away from St. Paul to drive another priest who was exploring a monastic vocation to a monastery near Dubuque Iowa. We drove down one morning and came back the next.

In the evening though, after our friend had entered the cloister, the two of us sat outside on what I distinctly recall was a very hot evening, and visited while the sun set. I thought to myself, “When is the last time you have watched a sunset? Sadly, I couldn’t recall. It was an epiphany of sorts- call it the heresy of busy-ness, but in today’s Gospel, Jesus invited the apostles to come away to a deserted place and rest a while.

Or do we really like being too busy? Is busyness the great escape from emotional engagement with the rest of our lives? The ancient Latin poet Ovid may have got it right: “You who seek an end of love, love will yield to business: be busy and you will be safe.”¹ In other words, if you stay busy enough, you’ll be protected from the demands of love. The time may be ripe for taking stock and asking ourselves why all this rushing, all this busy-ness? What is the good here? How does this lead to interior peace?

¹ Ovid, *Remedia Amoris* l. 143 “...qui finem quaeris amoris, cedit amor rebus: res age, tutus eris.”

How can we possibly hear the voice of God amidst a cacophony of sounds and a constant flurry of activity? Many years ago, Pope Pius XII wrote of the “heresy of action” as he called it.² He was addressing this letter to priests, though its principles are valid for others. While offering praise for the zealous hard work of priest in so many ways, as they seek to show charity to others, especially those most in need.

He continued however, by sharing his “preoccupation and anxiety for those who in the special circumstances of the moment are engulfed in a whirlwind of exterior activity, so that the primary duty of the priesthood is being neglected, which is its proper sanctification.”³

Essentially, he was acknowledging that such attitudes are characteristic of those who feel that they are able to “save the world” through those means that are justly called the “heresy of action.” He saw then that these attitudes separate a priests from the root cause of their strength, one’s own interior life. That life only is developed through prayer.

Our second reading teaches us that there is a plan, and that Jesus has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth as a plan for the fullness of time. We were never promised an easy life, but we were promised that our life would have purpose. If we constantly rush about, we will never experience the true peace that God desires.

For once, I am actually taking my own advice and will bring my mother for two days away at my brother’s lake cabin this week! I am grateful to Fr. Bambenek for covering for me on Monday and Tuesday. It is wonderful to be able to cover for each other- I think we make a good team! “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.”

² Pius XII, Apostolic Exhortation, *Menti Nostrae*, 23 September 1950, during the Holy Year

³ Ibid, si sono ingolfati nel vortice dell'attività esteriore, così da negliere il principale dovere del Sacerdote, che è la santificazione propria.