

St Pius-St Anthony 16th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B

A recurring thought to me is always, “Maintenance”. ‘It’s maintenance again-Everything needs maintenance.’ And, of course, why would I think otherwise? In this finite world, there are not any perpetual motion machines -everything tires. Entropy is a law of nature (things rundown/ there’s a natural tendency for things to fall apart). Unless, you maintain them or regulate them. Jesus sets the example today of such periodic reset, reboot, or refresh, to not just our bodies but also our souls.

I can’t help but think as we see the apostles in today’s reading come back from their mission (remember the instructions-take nothing along) and the report ALL good things; I imagine them like kids returning from a field trip- so eager to share with mom or dad ‘Guess what we did, what we saw, what we accomplished’ (of course, in Jesus’; name-that is secret to its working out good-it is all Jesus). So they come back from good work-but it was still work, and Jesus says, ‘Come away by yourselves and rest. Take a moment to sit with me, and let’s process what you have been through and done.’ I think again of those children so eager to share with mom or dad all the good things that happened; but also considering Jesus’ command today to rest, it reminds me so much about my kindergarten years and maybe the best part of kindergarten - do you remember? Teachers says, “Okay, let’s take out our mats-its nap time.” Not that anyone ever slept; but it was ‘rest time’ a recharge period after running. But here I also have to confess that in kindergarten, I also learned about another ‘ordered rest’, called ‘the corner’ Go stand in the corner and think over what you did. (Whoever thought of the corner first was on to something, because what better to bring together a distracted child, than staring at two walls converging to a corner. It does direct inward one’s focus to a center-a still point.

But that is not the type of rest Jesus calls the apostles too. He is simply rewarding/reminding them of the need to take a break with Him. The key point is ‘Yes’, to get away, but not just physically get away because then what do you do away – it’s not good to just sit and stew over what is not getting done; No, get away but it must be done with Jesus. He is the real renewing agent, not just the change of location. We have to have Jesus in the break for it truly to refresh us. For example, having time or a get away spot alone, doesn’t rejuvenate us; It is the presence of our life-giving God with us that brings the renewal. Like awaking in middle of night you might

think “Oh good more time to do work, but is that what happens?” No, you just wake and stare at the clock. So it is not just having the down time or having a retreat spot that makes the renewal, it is the one you are with-Jesus! In this case the apostles are commanded to come away, take a break, but making sure you do such soul maintenance with Jesus to be renewed, revitalized and rejuvenated.

We are all familiar with regular maintenance logs on vehicles, like its fluids changed, dirt-dust-pollen washed off it, the inside cleaned out, and most importantly gas kept in the tank. Well, we have to diligent about keeping regular maintenance done on our souls, too (check and refresh our relationship to Christ by dedicating regular time to Him). We all know the need for phone recharges or plug-ins. You may even know down to the exact minute in the day (after so much use or when certain apps running) that the phone has to be plugged in or else black-screen. Our souls have such a need, also.

I love how our Good Shepherd knows this: So, He is building (commanding) ‘Balance’ into the lives of the apostles. He says, ‘You went out and **worked** in my name, now come **rest** in my name.’ And Jesus knows, ‘Oh there will always be something to do, work waiting for you, needs are so great’. Jesus Himself notes that in today’s gospel when he looks upon the great crowd gathering around them. Yet, He still sends the apostles away alone even as the crowd pursues them all, because Jesus knows that if the apostles don’t have it (grace), they can’t give it to anyone. Again, I ‘m sure that we’ve all had experiences of such diminishing returns, when we needed fresh eyes to view a problem, because the longer we look at it, the worse it (or our performance) gets, so we have to step away/break from it. In those cases, is it better not to show up than to show up spent already and only add to problems. (Recall the old example is the proverbial burning candle at both ends: oh you can do that, but what do you end up with but double output for a bit and then a flash as the fires meet: classically called ‘burn-out’.)

So, Jesus commands us; just like he commanded them to go on mission, He also commands them to periods of self-care. God had already done such in the Old Testament with the command obligation to observe a Sabbath Rest-Day. Yet I would suggest, not just once a week, I think Jesus intends at least a Sabbath hour every day. We call that our prayer-time (built in periods of rejuvenation; and call it what you will, morning prayer or evening prayer, opening time prayer or closing time prayer to your day.

Maybe even our soul's daily 'siesta-time' to rest with Jesus where we open our heart to Him, sharing our aspirations or burdens, checking in with Him to ensure that our spiritual tanks are topped off, or our spiritual batteries are quick boosted or charged back to capacity. Our Good Shepherd knows we need such, and I love how commands such a time of refreshment.