

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jul 16th 2015

At some point in our life, our day or even in the past five minutes we encounter relationships, thoughts, experiences or dis-ease which causes us stress. Some might simply dismiss this as part and parcel to the human experience. That said, the intensity of the anxiety and suffering caused is not to be underestimated, especially if it goes unchecked. Jesus understands this and tends to our reality. “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

So, let’s check in with it... Let's stop for a moment to take a few deep, intentional breaths. While we do, notice any tension we are holding in our body. As we exhale, we can try to release that tension and let our muscles relax. What web servers are to the internet, our bodies often are to our minds and hearts. The body is the hard line storehouse of emotions.

I have been discovering this to be true more and more in my life. It is sometimes the case that before I am aware in my mind of the mountain of anxiety I am carrying, my body becomes the early warning sign. Like a tornado or tsunami siren that alerts residents of a community to an oncoming danger, my body alerts me to the growing danger inside. Most recently, it was a case of shingles, induced by stress, which reminded me to slow down, breathe, and rest.

We all have various ways we respond to Jesus’ command, “Come to me ... and I will give you rest.” Participating in the Mass and soaking in the comfort of the ritual and prayers like a warm, soothing bath. Getting coffee or tea with a friend who knows us at our core. Taking a nap. Going on a run or bike ride and allowing each footfall or pedal stroke to be a metronome setting a steady beat toward freedom. Gardening. Making a weekend (or longer) retreat and spending extended one-on-one time with our God.

I recently went camping in the mountains of Colorado with my wife and our dog Iggy. I sat staring at the feathery forests of pine trees, the snow-capped majestic mountains, and the glassy trout-filled lakes while the scar from my shingles continued to fade. This was when I realized something so simple (and yet difficult to remember). While I am stressing out in front of my computer at work, sitting in a meeting or working on a major project, all of this creation is also happening. All of it, and me and you with it, is interconnected.

Jesus’ invitation to come and rest is an invitation back into the web of creation.

It is an invitation to mingle with the holy members Thomas Merton spoke of in *New Seeds of Contemplation* when he wrote, “The little yellow flowers that nobody notices on the edge of that road are saints looking up into the face of God.”

It is an invitation to join the song that naturalist and mystic John Muir speaks of in *Mountain Thoughts*:

“Everything in wild nature fits into us, as if truly part and parent of us. The sun shines not on us but in us. The rivers flow not past, but through us, thrilling, tingling, vibrating every fiber and cell of the substance of our bodies, making them glide and sing. The trees wave and the flowers bloom in our bodies as well as our souls, and every bird song, wind song, and tremendous storm song of the rocks in the heart of the mountains is our song, our very own, and sings our love.”

It is an invitation to walk with Jesus as Mary Oliver does in one of her poems:

“Something has happened to the bread and the wine. They have been blessed. What now? The body leans forward to receive the gift from the priest’s hand, then the chalice. They are something else now from what they were before this began. I want to see Jesus, maybe in the clouds or on the shore, just walking, beautiful man and clearly someone else besides. On the hard days I ask myself if I ever will. Also there are times my body whispers to me that I have.”

Pope Francis’ recently released encyclical *Laudato Si* on the environment speaks to that sacred connection with creation that we must nurture and protect. “All creatures are moving forward, with us and through us, towards a common point of arrival, which is God.” [The encyclical can be found at [Creighton’s Online Ministries page here.](#)]

Let’s pray we are able to accept Jesus’ call to come to him and rest today - to hear his promise that “you will find rest for yourselves.” (Matthew 11:29) Tend to a plant. Eat something organic. Walk to work. However we do it, we will feel the undue worry and stress we carry getting swept away in the current of the cosmically charged Christ. In doing so, we pray with Jesuit philosopher, paleontologist and geologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “Receive, O Lord, this all-embracing host which your whole creation, moved by your magnetism, offers you at this dawn of a new day.”

