

FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY
Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
July 18, 2021
“Give It A Rest”

From the opening words of the first reading, “Woe to the shepherds”, to Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd”, to the Gospel where Jesus is disembarking from the boat only to find multitudes of people of whom He said, “were sheep without a shepherd”, it can be seen that the focus of these readings will be in some fashion on the concept of shepherds and shepherding (Jer 23:1-6) (Ps 23) (Mk 6:30-34).

On the fourth Sunday of last Easter, I gave a homily with the theme of “the Good Shepherd” as it pertained to Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and how fathers and political leaders should imitate him. And so, I do not want to rehash all of that as important as it is. If you wish you can refer to the parish website and read that homily. However, something else can be addressed regarding proper shepherding other than leadership characteristics in general as they pertain to statesmen or fathers in particular.

A “good shepherd”, a leader, who is properly familiar with his people, can by observing them carefully determine what their needs are. Such is the example that Jesus gives us in today’s Gospel. The Apostles have just returned from being sent out by Jesus “two by two”. The Apostles worked hard preaching, expelling demons, anointing the sick and working many miracles (Mk 6:13). They told Jesus all that they had done. Jesus as their shepherd could tell that they were tired from all the work that they had done. So, he suggested that they go to some remote place where they can catch up on their rest. He represents the difference between a shepherd and a slave driver or a hired hand. The hired hand, the scribes, and the Pharisees care nothing for the people and tend to abuse them in various ways (Jn 10:12) (Lk 12:45). Jesus could see this in the crowds before Him. They were without a true shepherd.

Recreation and moments of rest are very important for the people of God. This understanding is encoded in the divine law, the Ten Commandments. The third commandment “keep holy the Lord’s day” was given to man for this purpose. It is in imitation of God himself who “rested” on the seventh day of creation (CCC 2176) (Ex 20:8-10).

Man is both body and spirit and Sunday is meant to address both aspects of the believer. Our bodies need time to rest and recuperate from six days of labor and toil. The believer should take the time that his body needs to do this. Unfortunately, too many of our people fill up their Sunday, their “day of rest”, with all kinds of other strenuous activities that only end up making them more tired. It is the prudent parent who knows how to set a balance between rest and physical activity for their children and themselves (CCC 2184-2188).

The soul needs to be recuperated and nourished as well. We should take time to do this every day, but Sunday is a special day in which to nourish and replenish the soul, and it must not be neglected. Sunday Mass is the principal way in which we accomplish our spiritual restoration. Also, the Blessed Mother's rosary prayed as a family restores a certain peace on the family as well, for she is the Queen of Peace (See note). How many of us would like to have more peace in our families? (CCC 2181, 2708) (Is 9:6)

Sometimes even extended periods of rest are needed. We often refer to these as vacations. But, even on our vacations we must remember to take God with us. After all, a vacation is His gift to us, and we must show our gratitude and appreciation to God by remembering to attend Sunday Mass even while on vacations. Our Lord's admonition to "be holy" must take place even on our vacations (1 Pt 1:15-16). We should choose vacation spots that serve to build up our spirits yet are not an occasion of sin. This is especially important for our children. They must be protected from seeing things that are sinful and immoral as for example some beach locations and carnivals. Vacation spots out in God's natural world are especially suited for building up our spirits and our appreciation for God's gift of creation (CCC 2500). The location Jesus selected for His apostles is an example of this. They went to a "remote" peaceful place and not to central Jerusalem. Psalm 23 represents this kind of place. Also, a brief daily visit to the church can do much to bring us peace.

We must be careful not to succumb to a culture that tends to keep us frenetically busy and tired 24/7. The devil and his minions know well that we are particularly susceptible to sin and temptation when we are tired and restless and so he strives to keep us that way (1 Pt 5:8). For example, it is a well-known tactic of cult leaders to keep their followers tired and sleep deprived. This gives them better control over the people. Remember, the devil came to tempt Jesus only after He fasted for 40 days and was tired (Mt 4:1-3).

Try to give yourself a rest from the internet and social media. These only serve to keep you restless and worked up emotionally. Use Sunday, your "day of rest", as an opportunity to limit these forms of communication. Instead give that attention to your children, family and friends who are likely standing right next to you longing for your attention.

The spiritual person is well balanced because he is guided by the Holy Spirit. He knows when it is time to step back from frantic activity, take a break, and renew his body and soul, and he knows the proper ways to do it.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, could see that His apostles needed a rest. Let us follow his example with our family and friends and take our spiritual break, but most especially on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

-- **CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church**

NOTE: Handbook of Indulgences; Litany of Loretto, p. 65