

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 21-22, 2018, Cycle B

The Gospel passage from Mark, that I just read for us, seems to be perfect for summertime. Why? Well, we just heard Jesus say to his Apostles: "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." Doesn't that sound wonderful? Even Jesus understands the need for periodic respites from our busy and sometimes overtaxing schedules.

If you remember, last weekend from Mark, we heard Jesus send out the Twelve two by two to various towns and places for some demons and to heal the sick. They come back to Jesus and report about all the work they had accomplished, and he could see that they were tired and worn out. And not only that, Mark tells us that once the Apostles returned from their various mission trips, they and Jesus were so inundated by the comings and goings of so many people that they had no opportunity even to eat. So Jesus invites them to come away and rest, and they got into a boat to go off to a deserted place.

Unfortunately, when they finally got to that deserted place, they discovered a vast crowd had gathered to meet them. We are told, that in spite of being tired, worn out and hungry, Jesus does not ignore the people, he tends to their needs like the Good Shepherd he is. When Jesus disembarked from the boat and saw the crowd, "his heart was moved with pity for them."

Nonetheless, responding to the needs of the crowd does not deny the validity the point Jesus originally raised with his Apostles – the need to once in a while to escape it all to recharge our batteries, so we can go back renewed to be able to serve the needs of others.

Summer, generally, is our downtime, and hopefully, many of you are taking Jesus' advice to get away to renew yourselves, rest, relax, and recharge your batteries. We all work hard at our jobs and raising our families. Even those I know who are retired, aren't that retired; they are involved with the children's and grandchildren's lives, which keep them on the run. Many will say, we can't afford every year to spend the money to get away, but that means we have to be a little more creative in finding those "deserted places" in familiar surroundings.

And while I am at it trying to re-inforce the advice Jesus – let me give a shout out to getting away by making a spiritual retreat, where we can be away with God and spiritually renew ourselves. The Gospels have several stories where Jesus got away from the crowds, found a deserted place to pray and be with God – not to run away from the people, but go back to them recharged. You may say I can't afford a whole week retreat! Very few of us can, but there are day retreats and weekend retreats, and we don't even have to go far! We have Fatima Retreat House up the street, and the Benedictine Inn in Beech Grove. Surely, we as spouses can give a day or a weekend to our spouse as a gift of time. What Jesus says to his Apostles Jesus really says to us all: "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."