

July 22, 2018 – 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B  
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? Blessed, indeed!

Isn't it great when Jesus is nice to us and He calls us to rest today? He says, "Come by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a little." This is the time that God takes us and calls us to have refreshment in Him. But, we all want to do that. The problem is that people do this rest stuff for selfish reasons and try to be alone from everybody, and they don't get refreshment. Remember, it begins with Jesus today. They gathered around Jesus and then He told them, together, "Come by yourself", and He is saying, "With Me" to a deserted place. And rest." And, too often, people isolate themselves. I just need to get away by myself! And, then you get away by yourself, and you're not refreshed because it makes you lonely; it makes you isolated, so people run to the internet and they'll get people on Facebook; they have these friends on Facebook. And none of those friends makes you feel any deeper in friendship, except it makes you feel more isolated and lonelier. That if we do any of this stuff alone, it doesn't refresh us. So what Jesus calls us is to find refreshment with Him and the community.

And, we begin to do this when we go to Mass on Sunday. How often people say I don't go to Church because I can find God on my pillow. I can find Him in the woods. I can find Him in a beautiful concert. And is that true? Of course, it's true, this is the time when we come together as a family and find that Sabbath rest. That's why the Sabbath isn't just about getting rest. It's a family day; it's a community day. This is the time to come together with one another to show that we are not in this alone. And, what a great blessing! It's great because it is a deserted place. And, what do I mean by deserted? That when you come to Mass, at least for an hour, at this Mass anyway, you don't have your phone checking every 15 seconds; you're not looking at Facebook, you're not looking at texts, you're not doing any of those things. It's a desert; it's an hour in the week that, most of you, unless you are sleeping, are not looking at those types of things. So, this is a desert place. So, when we come together and worship together, we realize that we are not alone. That we're a family.

I often think about people that don't have "church." You, know, they do it themselves, and when they get sick, they have to do it themselves, and when they die, they die alone. We help one another, support one another, and care about each other. If someone is hurting, we go out to reach them. If someone died, we bring them into our community, and we celebrate his/her life. And, we tell the people who have lost that you are not alone, we're here; we're your community; we're your family. Here is the place we find rest, refreshment. Isn't it amazing, that if we try to do this stuff ourselves, and there are people listening to my homily right now that don't go to Mass, ever, who say I don't need to do that; I can listen to Father Larry's homily. That ain't going to do it for you, trust me!! We need each other; we need to come together to celebrate the family, to know that we are in need of each other! But, this is the Sabbath. And, what happens there in Matthew in Chapter 11, verse 28 or 29, it says, "Come to me, all you who are labored and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." If you want rest, you come to Jesus, and He will give you the rest you need, beginning with the Sabbath. Huh?

But, not only will He give you rest; if you listen to the second reading today, it says, the word was used four times; let's see if anyone paid close attention. The same word was used four times in the second reading. Anybody know what that word was? "Peace!" Good job! Peace! He is our peace. So, if you want rest and you want peace in that rest, you come to Jesus. That's the point! And, then the first thing is the Sabbath Rest, is what we are doing here.

The second thing is, so many people are on vacation. You can tell there are not so many people here in the summer because people go all around the place. Some people go to other parishes, like Edinboro, and different things, but we won't go there. But, what happens is, we go, and we need not to do a vacation without Jesus. You know, often when I do priest retreats, priests will say to me, they don't say it as much, but they used to say to, "Oh, Larry, when I am on vacation, I don't say Mass, I don't do any of that stuff. I'm on vacation." Well, you're on your way out, Father, in case you're wondering. There is no vacation from your vocation. You need to take Jesus with you when you go on vacation. You don't say, "Aw, I don't go to Mass when we're on vacation; it's our time away!" You take Jesus with you. If you're traveling and you can't get to Mass, you make sure, as a family, you come together, and you pray. You take Jesus with you if you want refreshment. Have you been on a vacation, and what you need is a "vacation from vacation?" Have you ever had one of those? Oh, I do it all the time, I need a vacation, from my vacation because it was all busy and did all these things. If we do it without Jesus, it will not bring us refreshment that we need. So, we have to bring Jesus into our vacation.

The last thing is that I encourage us that everybody needs to do a retreat in their life. I think of how sad it is that, like when I do DME or we have our Hope House Retreat Center, how many people never get to experience Jesus in an intimate way. I'm telling you the best way to experience Jesus is when He looks at you and says, "Come by yourselves to a deserted place and rest." Everybody needs to do at least one retreat in their life. You are not going to get to know Jesus the way you need to just by going to Mass on Sunday. I promise you – it will not happen. You need to do this. Some of you have never been on a retreat – never. And you can't use the excuse anymore, "the kids." Some of you are retired and have never been on a retreat! There is no excuse for you not to go on retreat! None! Zilch! You don't even have one. You need to go on retreat, so you can come to experience Jesus more. You will get refreshed, you will get peace when you go by yourself to a deserted place. So, I encourage you – start looking for a place to go on retreat!! Huh? In the end of August, the last week of August, I'll go on my retreat because every priest must do a five-day retreat every year, so, I go this year, I'll go back to St. Alphonsus, on Long Branch, NJ, which is right on the ocean. It's a hard time, right? When I have to spend 5 days on the ocean doing nothing but praying. Oh, it is so hard! But, boy, do I get refreshed! Boy! Do I get peace! Boy! Do I get rest! Everybody deserves that, and Jesus is commanding you to do it. You can go to our Hope House, which is 30 minutes away, in Union City. It's open! You can go there and spend a 24-hour retreat! "I can't do 24 hours!" Spend a day. Spend time in a deserted place with Jesus. Do a DME retreat! Go and do a Cursillo! Go, do something where the most important relationship in your life is Jesus. You give Him time, so He can give you peace and refresh you.

So, today, as Jesus tells us all, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place, and find rest." Do as He tells you. Let's come, not alone. Let's come together, with Jesus, and let Jesus

give us rest! You got it? You get it? Are you going to do it? May each of you know His Love today and forever!