

FINDING A DESERTED PLACE TO REST

In the scene from today's Gospel the apostles are coming back from mission. They are excited about the goodness of God and what they experienced. They want to talk about it. They want to reflect upon it. Jesus sees the need and invites them to find a deserted place, for around them everyone was coming and going in great numbers. This invitation is the beginning of the process of what we now would call theological reflection. It is what Scripture Studies are fantastic at doing. It is a reflection time away from the usual distractions. It is a time when a connection is made from what we have seen and experienced to seeing the movement or fingerprint of God within the same experience. Jesus announces to the apostles that this is important. Experience without reflection can lead to us missing the depth of what God is revealing.

When I was in the seminary we had a class called "Theological Reflections." It was a required course. Each student presented verbatim to the class of a pastoral encounter and reviewed it step by step. While this was to teach us sensitivity and how to become critical observers, we also were invited to move past what was said in the experience to the second part of seeing the hand of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit. This enabled us to become witnesses of the faith in others and in ourselves. We all dragged ourselves to that class and sometimes in jest we would refer to it as "Theological Regressions," but while we might not have seen its value in the moment, I truly do now.

The power of God is all around us. His presence is undeniable. His personal revelations to us are waiting to be explored. They are the moments we are to forever harvest. Sadly, we sometimes do not take the time to reflect, we do not discipline ourselves to move away from distractions. It might become far too easy to channel surf than to take the time to do an examination of the day and our conscience. A great philosopher once said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Scripture studies and examinations of our day before we go to sleep are all great disciplines. When we are exhausted, have we been about everything God wants us to be about or have we filled our time with things that may not be essential?

Growing up in our house, posted on the refrigerator door was a picture of an angel sitting at a microscope and under it said, "When we are too busy to pray, we might be busier than God wants us to be." May we take the time to reflect and uncover the greatness of God that is longing to be embraced.



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