

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Jeremiah 23:1-6  
Ephesians 2:13-18  
Mark 6:30-34

*(A bible open to this week's gospel and some fresh flowers rest on a cloth covered table in the gathering place. Small pieces of folded paper, each containing the name of a member of the community, are sprinkled on top of and around the bible.)*

### OPENING PRAYER

*(The leader invites members to some time of quiet to be in touch with themselves, the present moment and the gift of the Holy Spirit within them. After some minutes of silence, members join in singing, "Come, Holy Ghost," The song may be found on the Internet.)*

Leader: Shepherd us Lord. We lead busy lives filled with many things. Help us to focus on your message to us. Open our ears to hear your whisper, to hear your voice in one another. May we leave knowing your word in our lives more fully. May we have more resolve to become what you have created us to be and to know your love for us more deeply. In Jesus' name we pray.

All: Amen.

### COMMENTARY

So many things to do, so many schedules to keep, so many needs to fill, so many...so many...so many.... The pace and demands of modern-day living seem to keep increasing. Expectations to do more seem to mount. Instead of decreasing life's stresses, modern technology has actually increased them. The blackberry, the cell phone and now, texting and twittering have made us reachable anywhere at

any time. In the hectic task of contemporary living we frequently find ourselves tired, exhausted and worn out. We long for time to stop, to be quiet and alone. Jesus and the disciples had this same need.

The story in this week's gospel is such a human one. The disciples have come back from their mission of preaching and healing. They are exhausted. And the crowds coming to see Jesus have made it impossible for Jesus and the disciples "even to eat."

Jesus invites them to come with him to the other side of the lake simply to "rest a while." Jesus has a real sense of balance. He is about his mission, but he knows he needs time to rest and pray. Both his ministry and his knowledge of God's love for him flowed out of his prayer. God knows we need to follow Jesus' example and balance the busyness of our days with rest, silence and prayer. Mother Teresa once said. "Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gift of God himself."<sup>1</sup>

It is a bit ironic that the gospel story continues to tell how Jesus responded to the people who followed him as he sought some time for rest. They beat Jesus to the other shore even though it is four miles across the lake by boat and ten miles around the top of the lake by foot. Jesus responded with pity. He understands their desire to hear God's word. In this instance, he placed concern for the crowd above his own need and continued to pastor and teach them.

What does all this say to us? Many times our own intentions to grab a few moments of quiet can be interrupted with the needs of others. In those times, our prayer becomes one of attending to them. The temptation, however, can be to use the needs of others to keep us from any prayer. It is in prayer that we discover God's will, so that our work and our ministry to others can flow out of our relationship with God. We need quiet. We need prayer.

Henri Nouwen sums it up this way:

[S]ilence is above all a quality of the heart that can stay with us even in our conversation with others. It is a portable cell [i.e., room]

<sup>1</sup>Mother Teresa, *In My Own Words*, Jose Luis Gonzalez-Balado, Gramercy, 1996.

that we carry with us wherever we go. From it we speak to those in need and to it we return after our words have borne fruit.

It is in this portable cell that we find ourselves immersed in the divine silence.

The final question concerning our ministry of silence is not whether we say much or little, but whether our words call forth the caring silence of God himself. It is this silence that we all are called: words are the instrument of the present world, but silence is the mystery of the future world.<sup>1</sup>

Even if the real needs of those around us might call us to set aside our own desire for some time apart, we need to take the steps required to attend to our personal and religious well-being. When we are rested and oriented by having taken time for prayer, we will be ever more effective in serving others.

## **FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION**

- ◆ How are you balancing your busyness with times for rest and prayer these days?
- ◆ What prayer forms are meaningful for you?
- ◆ How easy or difficult is it for you to just sit in silence for an extended period of time?
- ◆ What are your early memories of prayer or being taught to pray?

## **RESPONSE IN ACTION**

- ◆ Schedule a retreat for yourself at an area retreat house. Consult with your pastor or diocesan office about retreat houses in your area. A weekend away would be good for the soul. Even a day long retreat can be a rich experience.

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<sup>1</sup>The Way of the Heart, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Seabury Press, 1981.

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week “to rest a while.” Sit in silence. Be in touch with your life. Be open to the presence of God with you.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(The leader invites the community “to rest a while.” Members dwell in silence for five minutes. A selection of instrumental music plays for a few minutes. When the music is complete, the community continues to dwell in silence. After the five minutes of silence, the leader invites prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer, members respond, “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.”*

*When these prayers are complete, the leader invites members to take one of the papers from the table and to remember that person in their prayer in the week ahead. The community then prays as follows.)*

All: Eternal God, You are our stronghold, our haven of peace.  
In Your mercy draw us all to You.  
May we live with courage and hope as we proclaim  
with joy that you are our ever-living God. Amen.

From **Morning Psalm Prayer**,  
Bernice King, SND.

