

Only one miracle made it into all four gospels. It transpired on the grassy hills by the shores of the Sea of Galilee at a time when Jesus' popularity--but also his vulnerability--was cresting. The day before the big miracle, Herod had just executed John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, his forerunner and friend, and he needed time alone to grieve, but a huge swarm of yesterday's multitude found out where he was, and made the journey around the lake and soon hundreds, even thousands of people clamored around him. Instead of spending the day renewing himself, Jesus spent it healing their sick, and speaking to a crowd large enough to fill a modern-day stadium. The issue of food came up. There are at least five thousand men, not to mention the women and children. Send them away, suggested one disciple. Then, as the conversation continues, Jesus took command in a way none had seen before. "Have the people sit down in groups of fifty," he said. It was like a rally--festive, orderly.

We read Jesus' life backwards, sometimes, because we know how the story turns out. But, this day, no one but Jesus had a clue. I suggest this is because Jesus' mind is not like our own; it is

above and beyond ours. His disciples were a mess; how are they were going to get out of this one? Five loaves and a few fish, 5,000 hungry people; while they were thinking escape, Jesus was thinking "tartar sauce." Murmurs rustled through the group on the packed hillside. Is he the one? Could it be? Jesus took two salted fish and five small loaves of bread and performed the miracle everyone was waiting for. Three of the Gospels leave it at that. "They all ate and were satisfied." Only John tells what happened next. Jesus got up, this time alone, at last. Jesus spent the night on a mountain, alone in prayer, connected to his father.

There is a lot of ways that I could take this Gospel, but I want to talk about what John highlights; it is not the feeding of the 5,000; it is Jesus feeding himself, regrouping – retreating and recharging.

Although this is a long time ago; the message meets us here today. In order for us to help others, we need to address our own concerns. When I was ordained a deacon, 20 years ago – this month, the leaders of our formation program said that we will be

pulled in many directions. The hardest word you need to learn and to say is, "no." Here are your priorities: yourself, your family, your work and then your church, but sometimes one gets ahead of the others. The hardest thing I have learned in these 20 years is that I cannot be all things to all people all of the time – and that sometimes is hard. I cannot make it to all the wakes, funerals and other church events that I would like; I have four grandchildren and they come first; they will be little for a such a short time and I want to be there as long as I can.

You all have these same issues in different ways as well. How do you balance time? So often, we spend the majority of our time doing whatever it takes to pay those bills; that is worktime that leads to overtime until all that is left is too little, sleep-time.

There are the needs of a growing family, and then we go to meetings in organizations we belong to, or handle all sorts of other tasks. Some of us long to be retired, but I have heard retired people say; I am so busy now, I do not know how I had time to work. It's a challenge to let ourselves slow down to take the, "me time" that we so desperately need, and there is a price

we pay along the way.

" Thomas Moore author of: "Care of the Soul" says, "We don't get a lot of support in this culture for doing nothing. If we aren't accomplishing something, we feel that we're wasting time."

However, Jesus says clearly here, solitude is the soul's retreat, an opportunity to stop doing for others and to surprise and delight ourselves instead. Emerson said: "Life has little to do with politics or vocation or practical matters or theology. It has everything to do with the way the air smells near the ocean or in the mountains. It has everything to do with the sweet breath of a new baby, or the stillness of time, ... or the stars twinkling through the clouds." But too often we miss all of this with the business of life that translates into a disconnection of our spiritual self. Alone—in moments of prayer or meditation, or simply in stillness—we can breathe more deeply, see more fully, and hear more keenly. We will notice more, and in the process, we can return to what is sacred inside of each of us.

So the end of this Gospel: after that night on the mountain alone, Jesus walked down and he rejoins the disciples, now

fighting a storm. He walks on the water towards them and the rest ... we know. That time alone redirected and connected Him with the Father; he sees clearly who he is and what has to do.

The summer is still ahead of us --- so let's try to slow down, now and again, and reconnect to those inner voices, and to take the time to touch that sacred part we too often neglect - before there is no time.