

The Apostles returned from their first missionary assignment. Jesus invites them to the desert. He invites them to prayer and reflection after having gone out two by two to preach repentance, to drive out many demons, to anoint the sick and to cure many (Mk 6:12-13). There is always a danger of our egos getting in the way, of thinking we can do this based on our own superiority and forgetting the real power lies with Christ. We must seek his help in all things. Exhausted by the pace of their travel, the Apostles need time to recharge and to contemplate how Jesus is calling them to even greater discipleship. We need that time for rest and reflection.

The Lord's Day is a day for worship of God, for rest and for work that helps others. Each Sunday we celebrate the living presence of God among his people. It is not enough to pray individually. Jesus prayed for the unity of all Christians (John 17:20-21). Therefore, it is important for us to come together to fully express our identity as brothers and sisters in Christ strengthening one another in his fellowship.<sup>1</sup> Coming together, we reflect on our many blessings giving thanks to God. We also listen for how God is calling us to greater holiness. How is Jesus calling you to bring the Good News to others?

The crowds followed Jesus. "His heart was moved with pity for them" (Mark 6:34b). Jesus has an intuitive sense of their struggles and sufferings. His sacred and compassionate heart reaches out to them with empathy. He understands their spiritual hunger and momentarily he will feed the five thousand. But first, he teaches them many things.

Like the people Jesus taught two thousand years ago, we too are hungry. We come to Jesus with frustrations over a pandemic that will not go away. We come to Jesus with anger that we cannot shake on our own. We come to Jesus with wounds hidden deeply in the suffering of our own lives. Jesus's compassionate heart reaches out to us with understanding as he tries to teach us what we truly need to hear through the church he entrusted to the Apostles.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI instructs us that faith, hope, and love are fundamental to the Christian life:

- "Hope is practiced through the virtue of patience, which continues to do good even in the face of apparent failure, and through the virtue of humility, which accepts God's mystery and trusts him even at times of darkness.
- Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love! It thus transforms our impatience and our doubts into the sure hope that God holds the world in his hands and that ... in spite of all darkness he ultimately triumphs in glory. Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love.
- Love is the light—and in the end, the only light—that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world—this is the invitation<sup>ii</sup> that God extends to us with the dawn of each new day.

Of faith, hope and love, "the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). Love holds the power to transform disappointment into quiet acceptance. Love holds the power to bring life back to the dead. Love accepted strengthens us to forgive others and to let go of hurts. Love helps us to listen to others, even our enemies, and to seek a path forward where there is justice for all. Love transforms us to recognize the hunger of others and put their needs first.

"There are times when the burden of need and our own limitations might tempt us to become discouraged." In humility, we must remember we are the hands of the Lord, his instruments for building the Kingdom of God in the present. It is presumptuous to think we can

do this alone without God's help. We try our best and "entrust the rest to the Lord. It is God who governs the world, not we... 'The love of Christ urges us on' (2 Cor 5:14)."<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, #31.

<sup>ii</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #39.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid* #35.