

14th Sunday of the Year homily 2014

One evening a few weeks ago I came home about 9:00 PM totally exhausted. The previous four days were filled welcoming the Catholic Work Camp youth to our parish and neighborhood. I coordinated them as they cleaned the front yards of forty abandoned homes and worked in our community garden. Even after the youth returned to their center each day, my evenings were filled with appointments for couples for their weddings and with counseling youth.

And so that Thursday evening, I came home, went to my bedroom, fell upon my bed and didn't wake up until eight hours later still dressed in the clothes I had worn the previous day.

Have you ever had one of those days when you completely spend all of your physical energy? It is especially on those days that we can fully appreciate the words of Jesus in today's gospel, "Come to me you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest."

But Jesus' words have were spoken to a specific group of people, not simply to those who were physically exhausted. They are focused upon a uniquely committed group of people. Jesus says that he gives

thanks to his Father for hiding things from the learned and clever (here he is talking about the religious leaders who refuse to believe in him) and revealed them to the little ones (his followers who are open to him and all the Father wishes for our world).

A child's mind is open and open to experience and willing to learn from an experiment. Jesus wishes to share the kingdom with us, but he can only do it if we are open to the experience of the Father's love for us. Only if we humbly take on the yoke of Jesus' way of living , of placing our trust in God.

At first glance, we might say, "We are open; we are willing to understand the things of the kingdom! But are we?

John Shea, a theologian, tells a story about a young woman who came to see him. He had known her as a teenager. She was intelligent and full of life and had been admitted to one of the top colleges in the country. When she walked through the door, he was shocked. She was unkempt and seemingly exhausted. She had dark semicircles around her eyes.

I asked her immediately if she was sleeping enough. She avoided the question and began a long, rambling and confusing story. He set her up with a psychologist who had her tested. With her permission the psychologist told him the results of the testing.

After he had shared the diagnosis, John Shea asked him, “What about the obvious fatigue, rings under her eyes?”

The psychologist said, “Oh, as a theologian, you should know the answer to that. God doesn’t sleep.”

Confused by the answer, John Shea said, “I don’t get it.”

The psychologist answered, “She has to control everything. She can’t trust enough to sleep. If she rests, everything might come tumbling down. Her body is exhausted because her mind is ever vigilant.”

(PAUSE)

How many of us are in some way like that young woman. We struggle each day to just keep things together. We are afraid to go away, take a vacation, take a break. We are afraid everything is going come apart if we are not there.

Well, today's gospel is for us also. Today's gospel reminds us that WE ARE NOT GOD! No matter how hard we try, we cannot hold all reality in our lives together. Today's gospel invites us to be as children depending on God's almighty and compassionate care. After we do all we can do, we need to place things in God's hands.

Come to me, all you who weary and find life burdensome, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Jesus came to show us the way to deep relationship with God, the one he called Abba, daddy. He humbly placed his total trust in him. As a child trusts their parents, he trusted the Father, even to the point of death.

And so today I invite you to

Come to Jesus, come to Jesus come to Jesus right now.

Come to him who is meek and lowly.

Come follow in his footsteps.

Come to me and I will give you rest.