

The Gospel today is what I call an “in-betweener”. It is a bridge between two significant Gospel events, Our Lord’s sending out of the Apostles and the multiplication of the Fishes and Loaves.

This doesn’t mean it isn’t important. In fact, this short passage is filled with rich and practical meaning.

Today’s readings give us a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. It is done using the images of sheep and their relationship to the shepherd.

St. Mark tells us that Jesus was determined to sneak away with His Apostles for a bit of rest. They set out for the other side of a particular body of water, normally a desolate, uninhabited spot.

When they arrived at the opposite shore, they found not solitude but wall-to-wall people! Expecting rest and refreshment, they encountered even more commotion. Something I think we all have experienced. Jesus had every right to send them away.

He wanted His apostles and He wants us to see that it is not about the **shepherd’s** needs but that **shepherds** exist to meet the needs of the sheep. These people were vulnerable, confused, and hungry... like sheep without a shepherd. And we are told that Jesus was deeply moved.

Just imagine..... the beach is no longer a deserted place, but is now filled with people. Not just any people, but people basking in the loving presence of Christ.

He will soon fill their stomachs, but now is time for his words of tender instruction.

First food for the spirit, then there will be food for the journey of life.

This is not only a view of the God's Kingdom, but also a wonderful image of the Mass!

Here in this place we hear the Words of Life, they are (hopefully) broken open for us in the homily, and then there is the Body and the Blood of The Good Shepherd Himself to feast on, to nourish us!

And in these words of life today we hear about some very important aspects of the Kingdom.

First, we hear that it is a place where we can find rest.

In the Gospel, we think that the Apostles are going to take a short break in their busy lives, lives busy doing the work of the Lord, but then that plan gets side-tracked

But it is not what they do or where they go that is the experience of rest..... but, rather, who they will rest with! They will eventually take their *leisure*, not isolated like the place, but with Jesus.

This is crucial to our understanding of who God is, who we are and what our purpose in life is. Let me try to flesh out why this resting in God is so important.

There is a phrase in Latin that summarizes this idea.... *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex Vivendi*...and what that expresses is, that the way we are oriented in prayer and worship, or, the way we come to rest in Christ will automatically orient the way we believe... and that shapes the way we live... and by extension, how we treat one another.

It results in both rest AND mercy, which are the two CHARACTERISTICS of the Kingdom emphasized in our readings today!

(Pause)

Obviously, it's a whole lot easier to live our faith inside these walls.....

But the challenge and, indeed, the final purpose of the Mass is stated shortly..... and almost suddenly.... after our Communion with Christ and one another. The Mass ends and we are “**sent forth**” to love and serve the Lord”

This is where the rubber meets the road.

- Can we live what we pray and believe while we are in the field?
- Or when we are changing diapers or driving the kids to practice?

- Can we be kind and gentle and loving, first of all, to those closest to us?
- Can we forgive another person?
- Can we further God's Kingdom while we further our careers or our education?

For **this is** the work of the Lord, the service and love we are sent out to do!

*(Short PAUSE)*

The answer ....is a resounding... "Yes!"

**But** ....in order to do it, we need quiet time to be with our Shepherd. More than this weekly gathering, as **vital** as that is...we need to hear His voice regularly to know where safety and rest and joy can be found. We need face-time with God....and we need it often, or, like sheep, we will get easily distracted and caught up in the other stuff of life.

## **PAUSE**

Here's the thing....we don't have to say any particular prayers, though we certainly can..... we do whatever we are comfortable with.

For myself, I find that whatever is crowding my mind when I try to pray, that is a good thing to talk to Jesus about. Eventually He settles it out and we can be quiet.

The important thing is dedicated time with God. No TV, no kids....no parents, just you and the Lord.

If you are not spending time in quiet with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit on a daily basis, I challenge you to start.

I'm not talking about an hour, or a weekend retreat, because that can be too hard to sustain. I'm talking about five minutes a day.

That's just slightly longer than it takes to make microwave popcorn!

Five minutes....stay true to just that much and you will find that your time with God will grow longer, naturally and comfortably.

If you are already making time to be with the Lord:

I challenge you, and I challenge myself, not to make it longer...but to allow it to be quieter.

**(PAUSE)**

**“Come with me,”** Jesus says in the Gospel, **“to a deserted place and enter into the quiet”**.

Then we will be rested and ready to get back to the work of the Lord.