

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

Mark 6:31b

Jesus’ invitation to go to a quiet place for rest comes in the midst of life-changing ministry for all who were near him. I imagine some of the disciples may have wondered why Jesus would lead them to a quiet place and rest when they had just returned from starting new ministries. They returned full of stories and may have been ready to do more. But before they could start something new Jesus suggested rest in a quiet place.

Even as they went with Jesus to that quiet place, others saw them and followed along. The crowd of people surrounding them knew that miracles had happened in the company of Jesus and his disciples, and they were determined to follow to them into the quiet place to get what they needed.

Months ago, I scheduled a silent retreat to begin a week after Diocesan Convention. It may have seemed unwise to exchange my calendar and its obligations for silent reflection and prayer in the company of our Lord and the brothers of Holy Cross Monastery. Diocesan Convention leaves me and much our leadership and staff with a long list of tasks to begin. Still, I kept remembering the invitation given to the disciples and to all of us, to join Jesus in a quiet place to get some rest. My retreat was a much-needed time to simply be in God’s presence without a plan or schedule.

While my vocation demands that I find quiet places on a regular basis, I think we are all like members of the crowd surrounding Jesus and the disciples in Mark 6. We know miracles, healing, and transformation happen in the company of Jesus and those who follow him. I imagine most of you would be willing to follow Jesus into a quiet place to get what you need.

As a person of faith in a world of diminishing faith, what do you need? Could you use some rest? Can you imagine a break from the worry, division, and anxiety that dominates our conversations and country? Would you consider allowing your fears to rest in the company of Jesus? Are you willing to explore this practice of quiet reflection, prayer, and rest?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, then ***start now to follow Jesus into a quiet place***. The quiet does not have to wait for a weeklong silent retreat. It may not be that a retreat, silent or otherwise, is the best quiet place for you. Jesus will help you discover the quiet place that is best for you. And I can assure you that

your parish priest would treasure the opportunity to guide and encourage your explorations in the spiritual practice of quiet places and rest.

You may find an early morning or midday walk to be an entry to a quiet place. Every Sunday some members of our churches arrive early to the empty church to soak in the peaceful quiet before services begin. It could be a museum, the beach, forest, or your dining room table where you find quiet and rest. The place only matters because it is where you are in the presence of the boundless loving presence of Jesus.

I hope that more people and parishes in our diocese will take advantage of Episcopal religious communities in our midst. Both Holy Cross Monastery and the Community of St. John the Baptist offer retreat space and retreat programs. The brothers and sisters in these communities are well versed in hospitality, quiet, reflection, and rest. Their gifts in these areas are a blessing to all of us.

Most of us need the help of others to develop our spiritual lives, to explore spiritual practices, to behold God's goodness, and to become who God created us to be. For all the excitement of their new ministry, when the disciples and the large crowd followed Jesus into the quiet, they must have been astounded when the little food among them was blessed by Jesus and all 5000 were fed. They received exactly what they needed and so much more.

What do you need? I trust God to guide you to all you need and so much more.

Grace and Peace,
Bishop Hughes