

Reflection on Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

In the gospel passage this Sunday, the disciples gathered around Jesus and reported on the preaching and teaching they had done in the past days. They were very excited and pleased. However, they also were tired and hungry. They had been surrounded by people for days. Jesus said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."

They all got into a boat and Jesus took them off to a deserted place. The disciples believed that they would have some peace and quiet. They also thought they would have time to talk with Jesus about their experiences.

However, the people saw Jesus and the disciples leaving and they hurried after them to the place where Jesus was going. As they went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them.

Jesus recognized that the people were like "sheep without a shepherd." They were hungry and yearned to hear Jesus teach and preach. They needed the spiritual nourishment that only Jesus could give them. Jesus recognized their deep need and longing and sat down and began teaching. And as he went out, he touched all who were in need of healing

We, too, need to take time to rest and rejuvenate. At these times, it may be helpful to ask ourselves: For what am I hungry? For what am I yearning? Also, as disciples of Jesus, we are called to be like Jesus. Do we recognize this hunger and thirst in others or do we stay focused on ourselves?

We are called to nurture and heal the people in our lives, especially the lost, the forgotten, or the unseen. How can we bring the presence of Christ to others in our midst? Who would appreciate 5-10 minutes of our time today? It doesn't have to be intense conversation, but perhaps a few words of compassion. It often is a great gift to notice another. What a simple and wondrous gift to give and to receive!