

We need a balance in life

16th Sunday of the Year (July 20): (R3) Mark 6:30-34; (R1) Jeremiah 23:1-6; (R2) Ephesians 2:13-18.

Jesus knew that it was important for people to get away from time to time. His Apostles had been out preaching, teaching, ministering to the public. Jesus suggested they get away from the crowds for a while and rest. So many people were coming and going that they scarcely had time to eat. So Jesus and the Apostles went by boat to a deserted place.

Notice it was Jesus who made this suggestion. There was a famous poem written that the devil didn't take a vacation; therefore it was dangerous for the clergy to take a vacation. But Christ believed in taking time off. Even God the Father is described as working six days and resting on the seventh. Today so many working in offices or sales departments or teaching have come to know the value of taking time off.

Dr. John Calhoun believed that overcrowded conditions take a terrible toll on humanity. So he built a nine-foot-square cage that could accommodate 160 mice. He started with eight mice and allowed the mice to multiply to 2,200. He gave them all the necessities of life. But the mice could not escape from their closed environment. Strange stuff started happening. The males who had protected their territory withdrew from leadership. The females became aggressive and forced out the young, even their own offspring. The young grew to be only self-indulgent. They ate, drank, slept, groomed themselves, but showed no normal aggression and, most noteworthy, failed to reproduce. There



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

was plenty of food, water and an absence of disease, but after five years every mouse had died.

People have to get away, to be alone at times. Jesus said the same thing, "Get away from the crowd for a while, find a quiet spot and rest."

Also, our lives were designed for balance. Many people are just now discovering there must be balance in their lives: between work and family, income and spiritual well-being.

God worked six days and rested on the seventh. Notice God created day and night — day for working, night for resting. But modern humanity is not content with that. Now our stores are not only staying open seven days a week, but some are staying open 24 hours a day. We were not created to go 24 hours a day, seven days a week. God created us so that we would spend about a third of every day sleeping.

In ancient Athens the great storyteller Aesop used to play childish games with little boys. Some people asked why. Aesop responded by picking up a bow, loosening its string and placing it on the ground. "Now, tell me what the unstrung bow im-

plies." His critics had no idea what point Aesop was trying to make. Aesop explained, "If you keep a bow always bent, it will break eventually, but if you let it go slack, it will be more fit for use when you want it."

Jesus never meant for us to be so involved in doing well that we neglect our need for leisure, for rest, for family, for friends. As someone said, "If we don't come apart, we'll come apart!"

Finally, Jesus said we need to spend time one-on-one with God.

So we must build into our lives a natural rhythm of work and worship, stress and leisure, being with people and finding a place of solitude.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, July 21

Exodus 14:5-18; (Ps) Exodus 15:1-5; Matthew 12:38-42

Tuesday, July 22

Exodus 14:21-15:1; (Ps) Exodus 15:8-10, 12, 17; John 20:1-2, 11-18

Wednesday, July 23

Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15; Psalms 78:18-19, 23-26; Matthew 13:1-9

Thursday, July 24

Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20B; (Ps) Daniel 3:52-56; Matthew 13:10-17

Friday, July 25

2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Psalms 126:1-6; Matthew 20:20-28

Saturday, July 26

Exodus 24:3-8; Psalms 50:1-2, 5-6, 14-15; Matthew 13:24-30

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