



July 22, 2012

Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"He said to them, 'Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little.' People were coming and going in great numbers, making it impossible for them so much as to eat."—Mark 6:31

Dear Friends;

The other night I had just sat down to eat dinner. It had been a crazy day and I was glad to just sit. Then the phone rang. It was a telemarketer who called even though I am on a do not call list. The voice on the line starts to make their sales speech. I tell him I am not interested and immediately hang up.

We live in a culture where our technology is constantly interrupting our lives. And while technology can be very good and useful it can also rob us of our humanity. I was at the movies last week and a group of teens and two mothers came in. It was a nice outing of family and friends. However, every one of the teens had a smart phone and they were texting and doing other things rather than interacting with their friends and family. Finally one of the girls told her friend to stop and put the phone away.

Our technology has made us voyeurs and exhibitionists. We want to know everything about everyone else and we want everyone to know everything about us. We have Twitter, Facebook and many other social media but how deep are those relationships. We may know a lot of superficial things about someone but do we really know them? To know someone is not merely to have information about them. The only way we can know someone intimately is to share life with them. That takes time which means we cannot be intimate with everyone. We have to choose and prioritize. We must make time for those with whom we choose to share our life.

Jesus lived in a culture where there was no privacy. People lived in small hamlets and villages made up of mostly extended families. Everyone wanted to know what you were doing at all times. Children would report to elders what others were doing. And to go off to a place by yourself raised suspicions—you had to be up to no good. So everyone would spy to see what you were doing.

Jesus' ministry had attracted a lot of attention. The disciples had just returned and needed to report to Jesus how their mission had gone. But with the constant stream of people they did not have the leisure to share a meal together. Why was this important? Meals are more than merely consuming nutrition. They are moments of profound human interaction. Meals build and solidify relationships. And for Jesus they were signs of the coming Reign of God. In fact so important that the night before he died he wanted to share a meal and make it his permanent legacy.

Even with this strong desire to be at leisure with those closest to him, Jesus teaches us the meaning of the meals that he share with his disciples—compassion. He has compassion for those who are even interrupting the important moment of intimacy with his followers. "His heart was moved with pity for them." (vs 34) Then he nourishes the crowd with the bread of his teaching.

Let us learn from Jesus. Let us not be slaves to our technology. Every human interaction is a privileged moment and opportunity to show love. Every meal is a profound time for human discourse. Let us cherish them. But most especially let us cherish our meal with Jesus—the Eucharist—and learn his compassionate love.

Peace,

Fr. Ron