

Today's Gospel is a continuation from last week. The Apostles have just returned from their first experience of missionary ministry. They are tired and in need of a rest. Jesus knows this and invites them to a quiet place on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. He says, "*Come away to a deserted place, all by yourselves and rest a while.*" Jesus has compassion on them.

This an invitation we may need to hear far more than we realize. And it's an invitation that many find hard to accept from Jesus. There is something very healing and helpful that comes from silence and moments of solitude. There is something about silence and solitude that enables us to get refocused. So often in life we are overwhelmed by busyness. *Busyness* is often a way for the evil one to wear us down and get us off track.

We cannot be working all the time, and that is one of the reasons why God gave us Sunday, a day set aside especially to worship Him and to rest. We all need to balance our work and rest by spending time with Our Lord God.

When we make time to be with Jesus, He will teach us and nourish us so that we may better understand who we are meant to be and what we are meant to do in our daily lives. In prayer, we listen to the voice of Jesus within us and discover what He wants of us. Alone in His presence, we should ask ourselves where we are going and pray about what we are trying to achieve in this life.

Silent prayer alone with God is one of our greatest needs. If we don't make space for God in our lives, we are wasting our time and are not seeing beyond our present activity. All of our life is sacred but we will never understand this unless we accept our Lord's loving invitation to go to a quiet place and rest a while with Him.

So think about Jesus' invitation to "*come away.*" Think about it practically. Can you find at least ten minutes each day to go find silence so as to rest in the arms of Jesus? Reflect, today, upon how ready and willing you are to accept the invitation from Jesus to come and rest *with* and *in* Him. Make the choice today, to find time to be alone.

Continuing the Gospel passage, the Apostles go away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place, but many of the people who saw them "*going and recognized them,*

*hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.*” By the time Jesus and Apostles land the boat, there is a huge crowd already waiting for them.

When Jesus and the Apostles see the huge crowd waiting for them, we might expect Jesus to tell the people to go home. However, when Jesus sees the great crowd, He is moved with *compassion* for them for they are like “*sheep without a shepherd.*” Jesus reacts with deep human emotions and “*He begins to teach them many things.*”

These people are the unwanted, the rejects of society, the poor, and the lost. These people are hungering for someone to love them, to listen to them, to accept them for who they are. Jesus knows the plight of these people and He will not abandon them.

The crowds come to Jesus because they know that He cares for them and no matter how busy He is, He takes time out for them. Jesus makes the people feel they are worthwhile. They are welcomed, and they are loved for who they are without any judgment.

We ourselves are much like the crowd in today’s Gospel because we also have the same human needs. There is a great hunger at the centre of our being for someone who will understand us, accept us without judgment and who will love us. Jesus sees us as sheep in need of a Shepherd, and He longs to be that Shepherd for us. Like the crowd, we must all seek to be with Jesus, love Him and follow His commands. We must tirelessly seek Him out no matter how difficult that may be.

The love Jesus has for you is infinite and it is totally unconditional. Know that Jesus has compassion on you and offers to be your Good Shepherd and guide in life. Jesus has compassion on all people, on His followers and on those who are lost. This is what we learn from today’s Gospel.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus knows us intimately and individually, as if each one of us is the only person in His care. Jesus calls each of us by name, the name we are given at Baptism. We are not some faceless person in the crowd. Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves.

Just look at the Crucifix to envision the greatest sign of Jesus’ compassionate love for you. We continue to feel the immense love Jesus has for us when we receive

Holy Communion. We feel Jesus' immense, compassionate healing when our sins are forgiven in Confession.

Jesus established His Church so that we would be united together as one sheepfold in the Mystical Body of Christ. Jesus gave us the Sacraments and the Church so that He could continue to be our Good Shepherd. Only when we know deep within ourselves that Jesus loves us with compassion will our love for Him blossom out more fully.

When the love and compassion of Jesus touches us, we are invited to pass His love and compassion on to others. Do we have love and compassion to help our spouses, our children, our neighbours, our friends, our Church community? To become a good shepherd, we are called to be the face of Jesus. We are to become like Jesus and care deeply for the people we are responsible for.

As disciples of Christ, we are commissioned to "*go forth*" after Mass and make God's compassion and union with Christ part of our relationships with others. At times, it may be difficult to love and to have compassion for certain members in our family, in our friendships, in our Church community. It is then that we must rely upon the loving grace of God to break the barrier of self-centredness, so that we can reach out to others with that same love and compassion that Jesus shows to each one of us.

Let us pray that in this Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we will journey together as the people of God and not only have compassion and love for each other, but lean on each other for strength and support. Let us pray with each other that we may become a caring and compassionate community in Christ's sheepfold. Compassion and love towards one another should be the true expression of our Catholic faith.

This week, put today's Gospel into practice, examine the amount of compassion and love we're giving to our family, our friends, our Church community and even strangers and also the amount of time we're spending on our prayer life. Quiet times spent with Our Lord in prayer and meditation will help us to grow stronger in our faith life.