

When you have nine scripture readings to hear and the first one is long, you know you'll be here for a while. If you're a person who's always on the go, it is very hard to rest. But that is exactly where the story of creation wants.

In our church we do not teach the creation story literally, but we do believe that God made the world. How it happened or how long it took we turn to science for help. In this version God is a methodical worker, first separating darkness and light, water from sky, and land from water. Then God started putting things there: vegetation on the land, stars in the heavens, fish in the sea and birds in the sky. After all that, the world was ready for the greatest creation, human beings. God gave humans dominion over all the rest of creation. It's a cool story. It makes the world look more orderly than it usually seems to be.

We hear that story tonight not just because of what God created, but because of what God did next. It's the part of the story that we'd love to imitate more often. On the seventh day, God rested.

Truth is we don't imitate that part of the story very well. Our days are planned from start to finish. We chase ourselves in our cars. We handle two other projects while we talk on the phone. We're tired at the end of one day and tired at the start of the next. People often tell me they lack patience. They get angry when they know they shouldn't, at people who aren't even responsible for it. It's no wonder. We rarely rest. We draw inspiration from God the creator. We create families; we create work; and we create a mess. But God does something else in that creation story. God rests.

We know the value of rest. Churchgoers rest on Sundays so our minds can be freed for prayer. Employees get vacations because rest restores their strength. A composer puts rests into a piece of music because the space between the notes matters as much as the notes themselves. An architect leaves space in buildings to show off the design. Rest recreates. In Ezekiel God promises to remove our hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh. If our hearts have been hardened God can give us a transplant if we just give it time.

The jubilee celebration that we begin this coming Christmas also knows the value of rest. Moses gave the land a rest every 50 years. He forgave all debts the same year. The new millennium will invite us to grant rest and forgiveness. I think we should start practicing now. If we lack patience, if we succumb to meaningless anger, if something about our lives needs to be changed, let's do it and make the jubilee worth celebrating.

Lent is a season of change. Our catechumens have grown in faith. The rest of us have assumed penance. All of us have asked God to change us. If we have spent lent well, we know tonight that God can make us better. Our attitudes and behaviors can always improve. So let us look to the future this easter with confidence. Let us open our hearts, so God the creator can enter there. God can make life more simple for those who enjoy the blessedness of rest.