

A little glitch caused Pathfinder temporarily to stop sending messages to earth about a week after it landed on Mars. One of the scientists quipped, "On the seventh day, it rested." Rest is an important part of religion. As the joke goes, a good priest gets up at five o'clock--twice a day. Another priest told me, "I hate to take a nap in the morning, because I just toss and turn all afternoon." Rest is good, as long as we don't take too much of it. It relaxes, restores, and renews us.

In today's gospel Jesus invites his apostles to take a little rest. Ironically, this is the only place in all of Mark's gospel where the term "apostles" shows up, meaning the ones who are sent, and the topic under discussion is taking a break. The apostles have just come back from their first mission, and they're telling Jesus all the wonderful things that have happened. He invites them away to a deserted place, so he can spend some time with them. Jesus valued rest. He took time for himself to pray, and time to be with his family and friends.

This story then takes a real life twist. Just when they think they're going to get away, the crowd comes racing after them for more. Just when you think you can rest at home, some of the family wants you, or the phone rings, or you remember something else you were supposed to do. That fleeting moment of rest can disappear like a forecast for summer rain.

We have to be careful; sometimes what we think is leisure will actually become work. It's good to plan for rest. Every day, every week, every year. True leisure will also refresh our spirit. Just by coming here for Mass every week, we treat our spirit to rest. It's not by accident that one of the expressions we use for heaven is "eternal rest." It's not "eternal entertainment," or "eternal activity." When we rest we enjoy a little bit of heaven.

Here at St. Regis we encourage our councils and parish ministers to make time for retreat and prayer together. This coming lent we'll have a parish mission to invite all of us to take time for renewal of spirit.

Like Jesus we sometimes get pulled away just when we want to settle down for rest. But it's important to do for ourselves those activities which refresh us--you know what they are. We rest not to be selfish, but to have strength to show charity toward others.