

We had a priest in our family who died last year at the age of 96, old Fr. Joe. He had more energy in his 90's than I have in my forties. People used to ask him, "What do you do now that you're retired?" He'd reply, "The same things I did before I retired, only now with a clear conscience."

Summer is for leisure, whether you're working, unemployed, retired, or just acting like you're retired. It's great that many of our families take some important time together for leisure, whether it's at home, at the pool, or on trips.

In today's gospel Jesus teaches his apostles the importance of leisure. Last week we heard him send the twelve out two by two, to visit homes and heal the sick. Today they come back, bursting with stories about what happened. You can sense the delight in Jesus. He tells them, "You've worked hard, you've done well. Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." They were so busy they hadn't taken time to eat. To celebrate their great success they board the boat and cross the lake alone to enjoy their friendship in leisure.

At this point, it seems like the story turns ugly. The crowd shows up, and Jesus who just asked for a little time of rest finds himself back at work. But he probably had this in mind all along. Ordinarily whenever Jesus takes the twelve by themselves, he does it to instruct them. Even here, he was likely taking them across the lake to teach. In the end, his plan hadn't changed; he just got a larger audience.

Perhaps the apostles asked, "Lord, don't you ever take a break?" Well, no, he doesn't. He works even while we rest. If we're enjoying the leisure of summer, it may be that God is at work, granting exercise for our bodies, refreshment for our spirits, a release from tension, and a recommitment to what really matters about life--family, faith, and friendship. When Jesus invites us to come to a place by ourselves to rest, blessed are those who accept, for in leisure, God grants refreshment.