

Dreams come and go in our lives. Far more die than come to reality. and beautiful worlds? Why do we so easily give in to barriers? Why DO WE LET OURSELVES CONFORM AND BE SATISFIED WITH WHAT IS? Reaching out to a dream can be risky. It can involve hardships, but what beauty can be experienced once we accept the challenges of a dream.

Jesus came into our world to help us hold onto our dreams. People sought him out because they understood that he could help them with their dreams of physical, emotional and spiritual healing. The disciples too tried to help people with their dreams and so when they came back from their mission, they reported to Jesus all that they had done; however the demanding crowds were so insistent that they had no time even to eat and so Jesus told his disciples to come with him to a lonely place on the other side of the lake so that they might have some peace and quiet.

Here we see what might be called the rhythm of the Christian life. The Christian life is a continuous going into the presence of God from the presence of men and women and coming out from the presence of men and women into the presence of God.

It is like the rhythm of sleep and work. We cannot work unless we have our time of rest; and sleep will not come unless we are tired.

We see here an example of the kind of tension that exists in the life of every committed Christian. On the one hand, there is the need to draw away to a restful place so as to recharge one's batteries, to reflect on and evaluate what one has been doing and to regenerate one's spiritual energy.

At the same time, there are constant demands placed upon our commitment to serve. We need to respond generously and empathetically to where there is real need. The emphasis is on “real need” and not just on the demands of others or our own desire to be in demand. This calls for discernment; there will be times when, with difficulty, we know that we should say “Yes.” There will be other times when, in spite of the criticism it may generate, we ought to say “No.” We need to be available, but there is no such thing as absolute availability. We are limited in the quality service we can give. In the life of Jesus, we see him at times leaving the people, in spite of their demands and going off to pray.

And so there are 2 dangers in the spiritual life. First, there is the danger of too much activity. We cannot work without rest; and we cannot live the Christian life unless we give ourselves time with God.

On the other hand, we must never seek God’s fellowship in order to avoid human contact. The rhythm of the Christian life is the meeting with God in a secret place and serving one another in the market place.

As we now return to the gospel, we see that the rest which Jesus sought for himself and for his disciples was not to be. The crowds saw Jesus and the twelve boating off. At this particular place, the Sea of Galilee was four miles across the lake by boat and ten miles around the top of the lake by foot. On a windless day, or with a contrary wind, a boat might take some time in order to make this trip; should this happen, an energetic person could walk around the top of the lake and be there before the boat even arrived. And that is exactly what happened; and so when Jesus and his disciples stepped out of the boat, the very crowd from which they had sought refuge was there waiting for them.

Any ordinary man would have been intensely annoyed at this since the rest Jesus so much desired was denied to him and his disciples.

His privacy was invaded. Any ordinary man would have resented it all, but Jesus was moved with pity at the anguish of the crowd. He looked at them; they were so desperately earnest; they wanted so much what he alone could give; to him they were like sheep who had no shepherd.

A sheep without the shepherd cannot find its' way. Left to ourselves, we get lost in life. Life can be so bewildering. We can stand at some crossroads and not know which road to take. It is only when Jesus leads, and we follow that lead, can we determine an appropriate direction for ourselves.

Furthermore, a sheep without a shepherd cannot find its pasture and its food. In this life, we are bound to seek sustenance. We need the strength which can keep us going; we need the inspiration which can lift us out of ourselves and above ourselves. When we ignore the Shepherd, our minds are still unsatisfied, our hearts are still restless, our souls are still unfed.

We can gain strength for life only from him who is the living bread of life.

A sheep without a shepherd has no defense against the dangers which threaten it. If life has taught us one thing, it is that we cannot survive by ourselves.

In today's second reading from the Letter to the Ephesians, being a good shepherd is described as following in the footsteps of Jesus, bringing union between people, breaking down the barriers of division, and creating communities that give and share.

it is time for us now to join the Good Shepherd in bringing scattered and divided people back together, in breaking down the barriers that

divide and separate people from each other—whether that is on the level of the nation, a race or an ethnic group, on the level of religion or social class, or simply to bring back into the fold those who are consistently pushed into the margins of our society.

But how do we become shepherds ourselves? How do we recognize our role? And how might living in God's peace change our lives and our world? To be effective shepherds, we must ourselves be at peace.

Finding our peace in Christ has its beginning when we discover peace in the broken places of our lives. We need to learn how to forgive others, not because they necessarily deserve our forgiveness, but because we deserve peace and being angry at someone only hurts us.

After all, human beings are the only species we know of that can self-transcend. We give meaning and feeling to our actions. Our mothers and fathers taught us early on that no one is perfect, but we still want to be our ideal self. And so from time to time, we make poor decisions. We disappoint ourselves and others. We self-inflict wounds that bruise our souls and leave us spiritually broken. We call those actions "sin" and such actions separate us from God and from those around us.

Finding peace in Christ begins once we acknowledge to God that we are broken. The Baltimore catechism may say it best when speaking of confession: it tells us to acknowledge to Almighty God that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have failed to do. We have not loved God with our whole heart and we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

Personal peace, however, is linked to finding and knowing peace from life's fractured relationships with others. I read, and believe this to be true, that we will forget what someone said to us, and we will forget what someone did to us, but we will never forget how that person

made us feel. We may not always remember the details, but we'll always remember the hurtful impact that such a person has had on us.

Perhaps as children, we came home from school in tears because someone we thought was our best friend wounded us. Those early betrayals and disappointments can still sting even decades later. We painfully learn that friendships don't always last forever. After all, life is about saying "hello" to some and saying "good-bye" to others. And to this end we must come to realize that falling in love with someone is fraught with risks. The giving of ourselves to another can backfire because sometimes that other person can smash our trust in a moment of anger, causing us unspeakable pain. Husbands and wives must never go for the jugular when arguing because they know one another's secrets and insecurities and consequently in the heat of the moment, it is possible to most savagely wound the one you dearly love. And as a consequence we may have to make peace with the realization that getting back to a place where a relationship once was is not always possible. However when one or both of the parties has been wounded, we are challenged to take the risk of seeking reconciliation, of wanting healing because that is the tough work of peace-making. But advocating for reconciliation, communicating your willingness to do what you can do to make right what is wrong, is good work and always will be. We find peace in Christ by accepting the promise of a new beginning rather than pining for a re-creation of something that you once had.

Sadly, in an argument, most people do not listen with the intent to understand. In an argument, most people listen with the intent to reply. In any disagreement there is a need for attentive listening, which means staying silent in order to give another the chance to talk, soaking in what they are saying and then, then perhaps responding if a response is needed. That having been said, a ship is safe in the harbor,

but that's not what ships are for. We can be safe and comfortable at home, but the point of life is to experience adventure and live it to the fullest. Certainly there are risks, but our lives would be empty without the adventure of close, loving relationships.

There is one last area where finding peace in Christ is so important. All of us would be wise to find peace in Christ about our future. We fret much about the "what ifs?" of life. And yet, our faith tells us that no matter what may come, God comes to us and travels with us into the future.

Paul uses the phrase "a new humanity" in an attempt to express his confidence in God who is the author of all that is new. And when we embrace God's promise that all will be well, a deep and nourishing peace moves in to our lives and colors all relationships in life.

Finding peace in Christ really begins and can only be sustained when we finally, joyfully, purposefully know that Christ has found us and in that finding, has given us the gift of His lasting peace.

Dreams do come and go in our lives, but we should never forget that Jesus is the one who can help to make our dreams come true, nevertheless it is up to us to choose our dreams well...