

3rd Sunday of Lent (B)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
March 7, 8, 2015

In his book entitled Sabbath Wayne Muller gives the example Charles. Charles was a gifted and thoughtful physician. Charles was also a good friend of Wayne, the author. One time when the two of them were discussing the effects of exhaustion on the quality of their work, Charles related to Wayne

“I discovered in medical school that if I saw a patient when I was tired or overworked, I would order a lot of tests. I was so exhausted, I couldn't tell exactly what was going on. I could see the symptoms, I could recognize the possible diagnoses, but I couldn't really hear how it all fit together. So I got in the habit of ordering a battery of tests, hoping they would tell me what I was missing.

But when I was rested – if I had an opportunity to get some sleep, or go for a quiet walk – when I saw the next patient, I could rely on my intuition and experience to give me a pretty accurate reading of what was happening. If there was any uncertainty about my diagnosis, I would order a single, specific test to confirm or deny it. But when I could take the time to listen and be present with them and their illness, I was almost always right.”

In today's First Scripture we hear the Ten Commandments, and in today's Gospel we hear the familiar story of Jesus cleansing the Temple. In today's middle Scripture we learn that even when we hear something of Jesus that seems rather foolish for our day, it is still more wise than any worldly wisdom or practice. *“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”* Now add to this, something from the Lenten Scriptures for the daily Mass of this past Tuesday: *“Come now, let us set things right.”* Where am I going with all of this?...the story of Charles, today's Scriptures and the short text from last Tuesday?

With some sense of risk, let me suggest that we have allowed ourselves to be so taken up into the culture that we have lost our sense of Sabbath. This is not meant personally for anyone in particular, but at some point each of us will probably need to do just that, because nothing in the realm of faith and religion makes any sense until it does become personal. So where do I begin to break open my statement, “we have lost our sense of Sabbath”.

Start with what a typical Sunday looks like in your life today.

Because you are among those who are at Mass, Sunday no doubt includes the worship of God. That is a great start! But that is not the case for 64% of Catholics today, those who do not regularly attend Mass either on Sunday or the Saturday Vigil Mass. And this raises the question. Do I build my Sunday around God or do I build Sunday around my things and then try to somehow fit God into the time

that remains? Am I squeezing worship of God into MY schedule, or do I first decide when to worship God, and then fit my stuff around that? Is the question, “when can I get Mass in?”, or what do I have time for after I participate in Mass? The focus of these two questions is quite different? If my stuff is first, then it is always easier not to have time for God. And personally, I don't want to be in a position some day needing to say to God, “I didn't have time for you!”

Another piece of this is that over the past 10-20 years, maybe longer, (and here comes a topic I really risk in raising) athletics has become almost a 'god' in our society, and the stadiums and soccer fields our places of worship. And the cost of a stadium ticket is always more than a Sunday Church ticket, even if you tithe 10%. It is everything from college game weekends, little league weekends, AAU weekends, and club athletic game weekends. (And this is just prior to March Madness.) Beyond the fact that there is little time on such weekends for God, there is also little or no time just to rest, even to be family. I know some will say 'we go as a family', but somehow I see a difference between a family weekend when the family really spends some time together, and a family weekend that has some of the family on the field, and some of the family on the bleachers, and everyone in the family rushing to get to all the places on time. Even when we are at home with each other, we can often not really be with each other. One idea for a real family Sabbath is that for a given amount of time on a Sunday, all members of the family be in the same room and doing something together with each other. I know that there is much to do with all of us at our jobs and school during the week. I am guilty of the same. But here is where the little Scripture from last Tuesday challenges me: *“Come now, let us set things right.”* I also recognize that none of us here caused this. You didn't cause things to be the way they are, nor did I. But for our health and well-being, emotional, spiritual, and family health, we cannot let things remain as they are. We need Sabbath rest *even the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom....Come now, let us set things straight.* And this is only one of the Ten Commandments, but I think one that while we may think we are fulfilling it well, we may indeed have lost touch with its real meaning and spirit.

Hear again what Dr. Charles says about when he is rested:

when I saw the next patient, I could rely on my intuition and experience to give me a pretty accurate reading of what was happening. When I could take the time to listen and be present with them and their illness, I was almost always right.”

Imagine what this might do with our relationships within family, and even at work. Imagine what this would mean in terms of our relationship with God. being present, listening, knowing and then doing what is needed, and what is helpful, what is necessary to our growth as disciples.

(and if this all is far too much from the side of an elderly single person without children, I am open to knowing that, and learning more from you.)