

Fr. Rudy's Reflections  
The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
July 21, 2024

### What Would Jesus Do?

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

It is the middle of summer, and our leisurely activities seem to run the gamut from peaceful days sunning on the beach to listening to the neighbor's children playing, while snoozing in an outdoor hammock. Whatever your pleasure, summer is usually a time of rest, repast, and reflection. So, in the context of July when the living seems a little easier, what better moment to ponder today's Gospel of Mark, as Jesus and his apostles attempt to relax and regroup from their long travels. Yes, just like in life, the best laid plans sometimes must be set aside for the greater good. This is one such occasion.

This passage begins after the disciples return to Jesus from their mission as described in last week's Gospel. This passage, in a sense, appears to be a lull in the action for what is to come later in this chapter: the miracle stories of Jesus feeding the 5,000 with loaves/fishes and his walking on the water upon the Sea of Galilee. These verses describe a moment in time in Jesus's ministry where he reveals his concern and empathy for those who have been working on his behalf and their need to "come away. . . and rest."

Along with demonstrating Jesus's compassion for his disciples, he also shows great compassion and pity for the crowd who follows them. Jesus is the true divine shepherd who guides his lost sheep into the kingdom of heaven and to eternal life. Despite the need for a restful sojourn away from the ever-needy crowd, he never falters in his concern, compassion, and love for his people. His devotion to humankind is manifested in our beautiful Responsorial Psalm today: "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want," and we as Christians today should always remember that Jesus is our intimate, compassionate close friend, yet also the transcendent perfect and all-powerful God who can help us navigate through any trial or difficulty that arises in our lives. According to Peter Kreeft in *Food for the Soul*, "only the worshippers of the true God can say both that their Lord is their shepherd, and their shepherd is the Lord."

As this four-verse passage gives a small glimpse into the mindset of our Lord, how can we translate his concern for us into a like-minded response for those who might need a helping hand along the way? Can we be in some way a guide, a shepherd, to others in our lives? We are flawed individuals in many ways and tend to put ourselves first, whether it be with our time, talents and treasure. It is difficult to give of ourselves when we are busy and preoccupied with responsibilities, commitments, and our need to rest from the weariness of life. Yet, when Jesus wanted a break in the action, he did not hesitate when others needed him. Yes, self-giving is our fundamental vocation as a Christian, and we must aspire, as difficult as it may be at times, to turn away from ourselves and toward others. What would Jesus do? He would give of himself, always, no matter the circumstances.

*"A life not lived for others is not a life."*—St. Teresa of Calcutta

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Rudy