

Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading

16th July 2018

Mark 6: 30-34

Jesus invites his disciples to rest after their ministry, and Jesus is moved with pity for the crowds who pursue them.

Background on the Gospel Reading

In this today's Gospel, we read the report of the return of the Twelve, who were sent by Jesus to preach repentance, heal the sick, and drive out demons. When the Twelve return to Jesus, he invites them to come away from the crowds and rest. But the crowds will not give them peace. As the Twelve have shared in Jesus' ministry, they now appear to share in his popularity.

The crowds continue to approach them, and Mark reports that the disciples don't even have time to eat. In an effort to get away, Jesus and his disciples board a boat in hopes of finding a deserted place. But the crowds notice this and arrive ahead of them. The crowds are so persistent that Jesus and his disciples cannot find a place to be alone. Mark's Gospel tells us that Jesus is moved with pity and begins to teach the crowds.

Our Gospel for today stops here, but Mark's report of the unyielding demands of the crowd continues in the verses that follow. If we were to continue reading from Mark's Gospel, we would hear Jesus instruct his disciples to feed the crowd in the familiar miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

The work of Jesus and his disciples appears to be a round-the-clock job. In the next few weeks, we will hear the story of Jesus' feeding of the multitude, but our Lectionary will turn to the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John to report and reflect on this story.

In today's Gospel, we hear the Twelve referred to as "apostles." The word *apostle* is a Greek word meaning "one who is sent." Jesus chose twelve men from among his disciples whom he sent to share in his ministry of preaching and healing. The first report of this is found in the third chapter of Mark's Gospel, where the Twelve are also called apostles and the names of this select group are listed.

We who are Jesus' disciples today have also been sent to share the Gospel with others. Perhaps our commitment to following Jesus as his disciple leaves us feeling tired and overwhelmed.

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus affirm the importance of times of rest and renewal. Jesus wanted his disciples to come away and spend time alone with him. This is what we seek and find in our life of prayer and in our celebration of the Eucharist.

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