

16th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B

July 22, 2012 4 and 5:30pm
Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

The Musical Rest

Most of us probably know that in music, we have what is called a *rest*.

The *rest* is simply a slight pause, a space, a silence between the sounds. For example, Jeff, would you please illustrate this by playing a few notes from the hymn *Holy God, we Praise Thy Name* – first with the *rest*, and then without the *rest*.

I think we can easily hear the difference. In itself, the *rest* is nothing, but in the context of a piece of music, it is crucial.

The *rest* provides a moment to get your breath, to reflect or to highlight. It makes the music a beautiful composition instead of just a series of notes.

The Prayerful Rest

In today's gospel, Jesus invites the apostles to "*come to an out-of-the-way place and rest a while.*"

Jesus invites them to a rest, a pause, a space, a silence from their busyness. He does this because he knows that a prayerful rest, first of all, helps us to appreciate and place in perspective what we have been doing.

And second, a prayerful rest prepares us to do what comes next in our lives. In other words, life and prayer can be just a series of words and actions without this rest.

The prayerful rest brings wholeness and a certain beauty to our life and our prayer. It does much the same as the musical rest does for a piece of music.

The Rest in Mass

There are times for this prayerful rest right within our celebration of Mass.

For example, right at the beginning of Mass, the priest asks us to recall our human need for healing, in other words, our sinfulness. As soon as the priest invites us to do this, there is a rest.

There is a moment, a few seconds, of silence. This brief space puts us in touch with our need for forgiveness, and the words asking for God's forgiveness or mercy only make sense after this rest.

Then, after we sing the *Glory to God*, the priest says "*Let us pray.*" And again, there is a pause, a rest.

In this rest, we are silently to open our minds and hearts to God and express our intention to have God come to us here in the Mass. This prepares us for the prayer that the priest will then lead and this prayer is called the Collect – meaning that he collects together the silent prayers that we have all just offered.

After the homily, there is another rest. By this time, we have listened to three passages from Scripture and to the reflections on them by the priest or deacon.

So here we have a pause, a space, a moment of silence and let the words sink into our hearts and minds a bit. And then we recite the Profession of Faith which only makes sense if we have first had these seconds of rest.

Next, during the Eucharistic Prayer, there are two rests. After the priest says the words of consecration first of the bread and then of the wine, there is a pause, a silence.

Here the rest awakens us to what is happening, something beyond words. It enables us to realize that we are actually repeating what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

And finally, there is a rest after we receive Communion. This silence makes us aware that we have received the Lord Jesus, that we have actually consumed his body and blood under the forms of bread and wine.

This pause makes us very conscious of God's presence within us at that moment. And it also leads us to live with that awareness as we leave church and go about our everyday lives.

Conclusion

So, much like a musical rest, the rest in our prayer makes this more than just a series of words, either our speaking to God or God speaking to us.

The rest helps us to appreciate what has been said and what will be said. It makes our prayer a beautiful and much fuller communication between God and us.