

Who doesn't love to rest? I'd say most human beings love to rest, relax, and enjoy the good comforts of life in order to be revitalized as human persons. We all *need* to rest—we all need to stop working from time to time in order to recharge our batteries and rediscover the most important things in life: our faith, family, and friends.

In today's Gospel, we hear our merciful and compassionate Savior speak to us about rest. Yet the rest that our Lord Jesus offers to us is *not* the earthly rest that is offered to us by a 5-star hotel. No, the rest that our Lord Jesus offers to us in today's Gospel is a *Heavenly and spiritual rest that satisfies our deepest desires* and gives us true freedom, happiness, and peace. In fact, our Lord Jesus, Who loves us more than we love ourselves, *desires our rest infinitely more than we do!*

Brothers and sisters, our merciful Savior doesn't just offer us rest—He offers us the *best rest! Make no mistake*, there is no better rest we can experience as human beings than the *Heavenly rest in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!* In the midst of darkness, suffering, chaos, and uncertainty, our compassionate Lord Jesus offers us the *best rest that authentically*

*rejuvenates us and strengthens us to become the best version of ourselves!* This is a spiritual rest that the world cannot give or take away! Ultimately, as human beings, we were *created* for this Heavenly rest in Christ. If, in this temporary earthly life, we freely choose Christ in love, then He promises us an eternal rest in Heaven that can only be described as absolute and infinite perfection—a state of being defined by pure love and goodness that will be greater than anything we can possibly imagine! Always remember that *nothing* is greater than God Himself and the rest that He promises us.

I think it's certainly providential that our Lord Jesus speaks these beautiful words to us today on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July as we celebrate our country's Independence Day! Our beloved nation, now in 2020, is certainly in dire need of the spiritual rest that our Lord Jesus is offering to us. Between this horrible pandemic and the racial tensions and civil unrest in our nation that is all being exacerbated by a bitter and highly polarized political environment, our great nation is laboring in great pain and is burdened with so much chaos, hurt, and anger.

When I hear the comforting words of Jesus in today's Gospel, I feel as if He's addressing them to our beloved nation in this moment of history—I feel as if our compassionate Savior is speaking directly to all of us as Americans in 2020 saying, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” I hope and pray that our country finds rest in Christ. Brothers and sisters, when we as a nation collectively rediscover God, then we will rediscover who we truly are as a people. When we as a nation rediscover *Christ our Savior and rest in Him*, then we will rediscover our vocation as a country: *one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.*

So how do we heed the Lord's words today and respond to His loving invitation to all of us. How do we practically rest in Jesus? On this earth, the best ways to rest in Christ our Savior are through prayer and the sacraments. Brothers and sisters, are we praying? Are we making the time to pray? If we're too busy to pray, then we're just too busy and something's gotta change! St. Padre Pio said that “prayer is

the oxygen of the soul.” So if prayer is the oxygen of the soul, then if we’re not praying, we’re dying. Prayer is Jesus’ invitation for us to be with Him and *to rest in Him*. If we struggle in prayer or if we don’t know how to pray as we should then we must ask the Lord for the grace to pray and He will give it to us!

The cardinal rule in our faith is that whatever we need, we must ask the Lord for it! If we need to grow in trust, then we need to ask for it! If we need to let go and rest more in Jesus, then we must ask for it! Remember the reassuring words of Jesus: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Out of His great love and goodness, God wants to give us so much, but because we’re free creatures, He will not force everything upon us.

Prayer is intrinsically connected to the sacraments, which are those great avenues of grace that our Lord Jesus Himself gave to us in His Church. And so to rest in Christ, we must stay close to Him through the sacraments, especially the Most Holy Eucharist, the greatest visible Gift on earth because it is *Jesus Himself*: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. When we prayerfully come before Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist,

whether it's at mass or in Eucharistic Adoration, we come before our rest and salvation—we come to the Kingdom of Heaven itself because wherever Christ our Savior is, there is Heaven!

In order to rest in Jesus, we must respond to His invitation to encounter Him in the great Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation (aka Penance or Confession) and the Anointing of the Sick! When we allow Christ to forgive our sins, heal our wounds, strengthen us in our weakness, and lift us up by His grace, we find rest—that great spiritual and rejuvenating rest that only Christ can give!

So brothers and sisters, as we prepare to worship and receive our Lord and Savior in the Most Holy Eucharist, let us heed His words to us today and bring everything to Him that is causing us any fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, stress, hurt, or confusion. Let us eagerly run to Christ Who so passionately wants to give us the rest that we so greatly desire: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”