

When Jesus's disciples return from working on the road for a few days, he says to them in the Gospel: "Come away ... and rest awhile." He's stating the need for his disciples to take a break from their work. Jesus is concerned that they have balance in their lives, to make time for pep talks with each other and for prayer.

Jesus takes breaks from his labors: he goes into the wilderness, up hills and mountains, or onto the water, to take a break. Even God the Father took a rest after Creation. He established a weekly day of rest for men and women, because God wants us to be human beings, not just "human doings."

Like Jesus's example today, we need to relax by pep talks with other Christians, and to pray – because without prayer, without nurturing our relationship with Christ, we're running on empty; our disciple engine is running on the vapors of faith. With our busy lives, it's easy to get emotionally and spiritually exhausted.

Every day, we Christians battle temptations and difficulties that are obstacles to our goal of enjoying eternal life with Christ in heaven. We get worn down by the struggle. Stress, frustration and other draining emotions can wear us out if we aren't reinforcing our relationship with Jesus Christ every day. It's like marriage: when a couple stops talking with each other, they drift apart, their relationship dies.

We need break time with our head coach and personal trainer, Jesus Christ. We need daily prayer time to relax. Our previous Pope, Benedict XVI, said it well: "One who prays is not afraid; one who prays is never alone; one who prays is saved!"

When I entered the seminary, for the first time in my life, I felt I had no spare time. But the professors kept harping "you gotta carve out some time for prayer every day or you'll burnout. You can't sustain your faith on your own power. You won't be any good for anyone." ... They were right. And that's true for all Christians.

So I got out my daily calendar. I scheduled prayer time. I made it a regular daily appointment. ... Maybe you need to. If we think we're too busy to pray, we're too busy, and that's what we have to do: schedule it, make it a regular daily appointment, enter it as rest time for daily prayer, even if it's just 10 minutes. Go to a quiet space, in our bedroom, our homes, our cars, or any place where we can refresh and restore ourselves, where we can feed our souls.

Otherwise it's not going to happen; other things will take over. We'll have no quality time with God our Lover; we'll be too tired to give him any time at all.

All disciples of Christ, all Christians, need breaks. Let's see prayer like Jesus did: as a break, as relaxing. Prayer is our fuel, so we can have a full and active life. A Christian's prayer breaks recharge our spiritual batteries. We need Christ's friendship for strength and wisdom. If we want to have a relationship with Christ, we need prayer time with Jesus, just like he needed when he prayed to his Father.

Jesus's break time was prayer; he relaxed by praying. Prayer is relaxing, resting in Christ, who wants to hear about our day, who desires our friendship, is eager for it, who cares about us, who wants to draw us into his divine life someday in heaven.

There are times when we are called to feed others, and there are times when we need to be fed. ... Jesus shows us it's not selfish to take time for it.

Fr. John Ozella, July 22, 2018
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