

And Jesus said, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile.” – Mark 6:31

Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace be to you all, my beloved family and friends of the Neighbors in Christ Parish. Welcome to July and summer! I have recently returned from a wonderful vacation where my family and I travelled to Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa for a family wedding and well deserved time away. This is the first time I have been away for more than three days in nearly two and a half years. This is partly due to the pandemic, but I also find it difficult to take time off. Though I need to, it is often too difficult for me to pull the trigger to make plans and put something on the calendar and do it. I know I have the time off, but I simply fail to do it. Sound familiar...maybe?

This message may very well be the thing you need to read. Read this aloud: **I need time off**. Do it again...**I need time off**. How did that sound? When was the last time you took time for yourself? When was the last time you put something on the calendar and looked forward to getting away to do something great, anything...to make you feel better? When was the last time you simply told yourself that you had to take the covers and pull them over your head because you needed...*required*...the rest to catch up on some sleep or rest? Simply put, when was the last time you put yourself first and got out of Dodge?

Beloved, even Jesus needed time away. I chose this small, but important piece of sacred scripture from the Gospel of Mark to remind you that even our Lord had to get away and relax from all that he was doing. In this story, the Son of Humanity had been out and about in Galilee teaching his faithful disciples of the Kingdom of God. He continually displayed to them this thing called ‘love’ and ‘compassion’ by feeding the poor, casting out demons, and recognizing the marginalized. Jesus, as mentor and teacher, wished to take them away from what they have been accomplishing in God’s name and discuss their individual and communal experiences. Instead, the crowds caught them off guard and were pulled back to their duties. The Twelve further repeated to their fellow Galileans that God loves all, regardless of who they are, where they come from, or who they associate with. But they needed a break and were exhausted, and Jesus saw that in them, and also in himself. They needed well deserved time away.

Whether it is a vacation, a long weekend, or simply a day to ourselves, we as human beings require a time of peace, ease, and refreshment in ourselves. Remember, even God rested on the seventh day after creating everything in six, and calls us to do the same. However, we cannot always just drop what we are doing and walk away – some of us (like myself) have to make the plans and move around our schedules to make it happen. But it can still be done. If that’s a tough one for you to do, simply let someone know what you need held with and I’m sure they’ll be able to assist you. Give it a shot, and at the least, it may offer you something to look forward to. *Let me know how it works for you.*

In Christ,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish