

July 22, 2018; Mk. 6: 30-34, 53-56 & Jer. 23: 1-6

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Spirit of Compassion](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Gestating Compassion](#)

[New Melleray Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

The twelve have been sent out and we hear of John the Baptist's death. Herod thinks Jesus is John reincarnated and this causes him anxiety and fascination. Now the returning twelve burst on the scene with excited tales of healing and teaching. Jesus knows that they have not yet had a chance to integrate what they just have experienced, so he tries to get away for a debriefing time. No such luxury is to be theirs however. No quiet, no anonymity, not even something to eat. It is easy to see then why even the feeding of the crowd, and the walking on the water episode, just do not have a chance to sink in. We too, like they, are facing times where we are in effect sheep without shepherds. Where do you go to find enough quiet to reflect on the demands of the times?

#### Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

**30** The apostles gathered around Jesus and **reported** to him all they had done and **taught**. **31** Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a **chance to eat**, he said to them,

"Come with me by yourselves to a **quiet place** and get some **rest**." **32** So they went away by themselves in a **boat** to a **solitary place**. **33** But many who saw them leaving **recognized** them and **ran on foot** from all the towns and got there ahead of them. **34** When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had **compassion** on them, because they were like **sheep** without a **shepherd**. So he began **teaching** them many things.

*(The Revised Common Lectionary adds these verses)*

**53** When they had **crossed over**, they landed at **Gennesaret** and **anchored** there. **54** As soon as they got out of the **boat**, people **recognized** Jesus. **55** They **ran** throughout that **whole region** and carried the **sick** on **mats** to wherever they heard he was. **56** And wherever he went--into villages, towns or countryside--they placed the **sick** in the **marketplaces**. They **begged** him to let them **touch** even the **edge** of his cloak, and all who **touched** him were **healed**.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What happens to your faith life when you don't take the time to rest and reflect?

**PRAYER:** Good shepherd, like those in this reading today we are desperately needing someone who will listen to our fears and wounds. We have ever more ways to plead for help but are drowned out by so much screaming around us. Help us find our quiet place so that we can cross over to you and find the help we need. Amen

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**APOSTLES:** The word apostle means one who is sent out. This is the only time Mark uses this word for the disciples.

*Have you ever been sent out and came back so affected by your experience that you now are different and needed a new name? Is this what happened to the disciples?*

**REPORTED:** To re-port is to carry something back.

*What did the apostles carry back to Jesus? How do you suppose they were changed by their experiences?*

**TAUGHT / TEACHING:** The apostles taught when out on their mission, and later, Jesus is found teaching the crowds that quickly gathered. It appears that the people were starving for new words about God.

*How had the apostles prepared the crowds for Jesus' teaching?*

**CHANCE TO EAT:** (see information below) Mark often emphasizes the press of the situation by saying that there wasn't even time to eat. (Mk. 3:20)

*When was the last time you described the urgency of a situation by saying you didn't even have time to eat? What did that feel like? How can this memory help you to get in touch with this scripture passage?*

**QUIET PLACE / SOLITARY PLACE:** (see information below) In a culture that placed supreme value on togetherness and saw aloneness as threatening, a person risked misunderstanding if they sought out a quiet place to get away from everyone and everything. *What do you think Jesus was doing when he took the apostles off alone to get away? Do you have any place to get off alone with Jesus? Do the people in your life understand your need to do this?*

**REST:** To rest is to be quiet.  
*Do you find the quiet a place to rest, or does it make you anxious?*

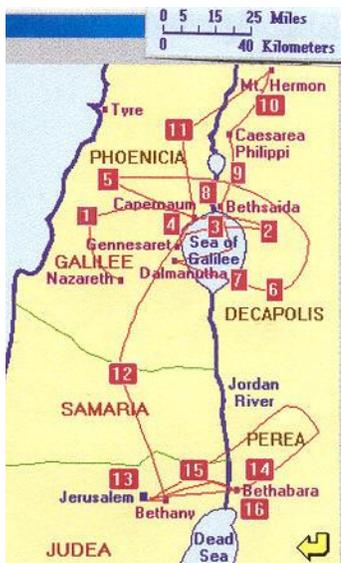
**BOAT:** Jesus often uses a boat to teach, or to get away from the press of the crowds. The boat was seen as a metaphor of the early church.  
*What makes a boat a useful tool for both these situations? Is a boat a good metaphor for the church today? If so, why? If not, why?*

**RECOGNIZED:** The crowds now recognize the apostles and Jesus and they were not going to let them get away.  
*How do you think the apostles felt as they arrive expecting time off, and the crowd is already waiting for them?*

**RAN ON FOOT:** Once the crowd realized where the boat would land, they took off on foot to outrun the boat.  
*What does this tell you about the crowd? Have you ever 'ran on foot' in order to not miss something? How can this memory help you understand this situation?*

**COMPASSION:** (See more below) The word compassion means to share the passion of someone. This crowd's passion to hear what Jesus had to say was so great, that they left everything so they would not miss anything.  
*Jesus sees the desperate passion/need of the people, and this aroused his compassion. How did this help him meet the needs of the crowd? What impact do you think this made on the apostles?*

**SHEEP / SHEPHERD:** Sheep are animals that need good care in order to thrive. They are unable to make it on their own, because too many things can cause disease or death. They are able to learn the sound of their shepherd's voice, and they willingly follow a leader. A good book to open up the metaphor of sheep and shepherd is the book **A Shepherd Looks at Ps. 23**, by Phillip Keller.  
*Jesus responds to this crowd like a shepherd with a flock of troubled sheep. Their 'hunger' for his teaching is great, so he begins to teach at great length. Does this piece of scripture feed your hunger to know more about the God of Jesus?*



**CROSSED:** The apostles get across the lake, but the experience of Jesus walking on the water and stilling the storm, does not make it clear to them who Jesus is.  
*What do you think kept them from understanding? If they would have had the quiet time they set out for originally, do you think that would have helped? Have you ever had things happen so fast that you didn't have time to think things through? Could this be happening here?*

**GENNESARET:** In John's gospel (6:24) the place is named Capernaum. These two places are not far from each other. This could indicate two memories of this account.  
*When you study scripture, do you find these differences troublesome? What do you do to search out the reasons for the differences? Has this ever deepened your understanding of what the author was doing?*

**ANCHORED:** When a boat is anchored it is tied to a place.  
*What effect would anchoring the boat have on the awaiting crowd?*

**WHOLE REGION:** Mark tells us that the entire region responds quickly to Jesus' presence.  
*If you were one of the apostles, what effect do you think this would have had on you?*

**SICK: HEALED:** When a person is sick, hungry, or in some kind of need, their ability to hear is compromised.  
*Do you think the people understood this, or do you think they simply wanted the physical healing?*

**MATS:** The mats were the way the sick were brought to Jesus for healing.  
*What are the 'mats' that you use to bring the ones needing healing to Jesus?*

**MARKETPLACES:** The marketplaces of the villages and towns were the places where people gathered.  
*Where would you bring someone needing healing today?*

**BEGGED:** Word must have reached the people about healing of the woman in chapter 5:25f. Now they beg him to let them touch his cloak so that they also can be healed. The woman was told it was her faith that healed her, not the touching of the cloak.

*Do you miss this assurance in this story?*

**TOUCH:** It was commonly thought that some things had magical properties, especially things that were associated with holy people or places.

*Are there any examples of this thinking yet today? Can you name a few?*

**EDGE:** An edge is the place of meeting between one thing and another.

*What is it about an edge that makes it a place of power?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mk. 6:31 // Mk. 3:20; Mt. 14:13; Lk. 9:10; **Mk. 6:32** // Mt. 14:13-21; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-13; **Mk. 6:56** // Mk. 5:27f; Acts 5:15; Jn. 6:24;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Jer. 23:1-6; [Ps. 23:1-6](#); Eph. 2:13-18; Mk. 6: 30-34

Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Sam. 7:1-14; [Ps. 89: 20-37](#); Eph. 2:11-22; Mk. 6:30-34, 53-56;

### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

76. A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life's depths and finding authentic happiness.[70] He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief. They sense that the other is flesh of our flesh, and are not afraid to draw near, even to touch their wounds. They feel compassion for others in such a way that all distance vanishes. In this way they can embrace Saint Paul's exhortation: "Weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15).

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html)

The whole of life has a power to soften and open us against our will, to irrigate our spirits, and in those moments, we discover that tears, the water from within, are a common blood, mysterious and clear. We may speak different languages and live very different lives, but when that deep water swells to the surface, it pulls us to each other. – Mark Nepo, *The Book of Awakening*

Mostly we think of people with great authority as higher up, far away, hard to reach. But spiritual authority comes from compassion and emerges from deep inner solidarity with those who are "subject" to authority. The one who is fully like us, who deeply understands our joys and pains or hopes and desires, and who is willing and able to walk with us, that is the one to whom we gladly give authority and whose "subjects" we are willing to be. It is the compassionate authority that empowers, encourages, calls forth hidden gifts, and enables great things to happen. True spiritual authorities are located in the point of an upside-down triangle, supporting and holding into the light everyone they offer their leadership to. Henri Nouwen

"Compassion is the radicalism of our time," Dalai Lama

True compassion recognizes that a society that creates beggars needs to be totally restructured. - Anne Braden

Mk. 6.30–44: Feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14.13–21; Lk 9.10–17; Jn 6.1–13). There are two miraculous feedings in Mark, the first in predominantly Jewish territory, the second (8.1–10) in a predominantly Gentile area. Matthew includes both, while Luke and John have only one. A number of motifs evoke the Exodus and Elisha's miracles (Ex 16–18; 2 Kings 4.42–44). 33: Improbably, the people see them leaving by boat, recruit others from all the towns, and run ahead on foot, and yet are able to arrive at the deserted place ahead of them (2.1–12n.). This emphasizes the miraculous nature of the kingdom and the ingathering of peoples at the end of time. 34: Sheep without a shepherd, 1 Kings 22.17. It is typical of hero legends that the hero is called out of his preferred isolation (v. 31) by compassion for the people (e.g., Moses; Ex 3–4), who will ultimately abandon him.

*Fringe of his cloak*, the blue threads ("tzitzit") commanded by God to be worn by Israelite males at the corners of their cloaks (Num. 15: 37-40). Jesus here is shown observing a requirement of Torah. Pgs.72 73.

Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Marc Zvi. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2011

Crowds were not new to the prophetic healer from Nazareth. With compassion He healed the sick, freed the possessed of demons and forgave their sins, but this was the last straw – to prevent Him and His friends from eating a meal! This reaction of Jesus and His friends to being hassled while they ate gives us an insight into another culture and what it valued. Feasting together, even the most common of meals, was a special time, sacred and symbolic. For the ancient peoples, eating and drinking together was filled with importance beyond simply "refueling" the body.

Hays, Edward. *Pray All Ways*. Easton, KS. Forest of Peace Books. 1991. Pg. 140



This is part of a panel in an olive-wood door from the 5th century basilica of Santa Sabina, one of the oldest churches in Rome. The middle panel depicts Jesus with a wand, as is often seen in ancient pictures and carvings. Catacomb paintings also show Jesus with a rod in his hand as he performs miracles. Scholars puzzle over this, and what the early Christians were trying to say with this practice. Jensen, Robin. Dining in Heaven. Bible Review. 10/98. Pages32ff

In first century Palestine, there were fewer than three of four large cities like Jerusalem. Ninety percent of the population lived outside the large cities in hamlets of villages with a small number of residents. The population of Nazareth may not have been more than 150 and could have been as small as 50. Try to imagine “privacy” in a settlement of this size!

These small settlements were not packed densely close to each other. There was a significant distance between them, and this uninhabited space was generally viewed as chaos or “a lonely place.”..... any group going off to a lonely place raised suspicions. What did they have to hide? Who goes off to uninhabited places known to be rife with demons and wild beasts?

Pilch, John J. The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle B\_The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1996. Pages 112-3.

Jesus, who came from a family of skilled peasants (he and his father were probably carpenters in rural Nazareth), when confronted with the suffering of the lost sheep, was moved to approach them with such unexpected, self-forgetful, and heart-felt devotion that he totally identified with them. And he was moved to do so by *splagchna*. (*Splagchna* literally means ‘viscera, the inward parts: the seat of feelings’.

Peters, Dr. Carmichael. A Gadamerian Reading of Karl Rahner’s Theology of Grace and Freedom. NY. Catholic Scholars Press. 2000

Jesus did not wait until everyone had been properly cared for, until all who sought him were healed. He did not ask permission to go, nor did he leave anyone behind: on call,” or even let his disciples know where he was going. Jesus obeyed a deeper rhythm. When the moment for rest had come, the time for healing was over. He would simply stop, retire to a quiet place, and pray. Sometimes he would take the disciples with him...He did not wait until they had completed all their work; he invited them to rest in the middle of their busyness, when they had no leisure, even to eat. One translation of the biblical phrase “to pray” is “to come to rest.” When Jesus prayed he was at rest, nourished by the healing spirit that saturates those still, quiet places. Pg. 25.

When I stop to pray, I feel my body release, disengage slightly from the rush of activity and progress, and float on the tides of a deeper time, tides that have borne up the lives of all who have prayed throughout eternity. Pg.89.

Muller, Wayne. Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest. NY. Bantam Books.1999.

"To demand that others should provide you with textbook answers is like asking a strange woman to give birth to your baby. There are insights that can be born only of your own pain, and they are the most precious." – Janusz Korczak

Likewise the gospel says, “He had compassion...He took pity” and this does not say that when he “had compassion” or “took Pity” that he called on a reserve source or divine power and worked the miracle, but rather is it always a clear affirmation that the miracles were the work of his human compassion and pity, and they are the promise that those who believe in the “Word made flesh” will, by believing, become the word made flesh themselves and, by their pity and compassion, perform the same miracles and will perform even greater works. Real believers in the Word of God by their faith become the real living loving presence of God, doing the wondrous works of God by their immediate sacramental presence, not as a remote link in a chain of causality.

Parr, Raymond. Process Person Presence. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990. Page 116.

Moments of true compassion will remain engraved on our hearts as long as we live. Often these are moments without words; moments of deep silence. Pg. 106 Nouwen, Henri. Here and Now. NY. Crossroad, 1994.

All of Jesus’ guidance for ministry, his seeming “tips for the road,” are very concrete and interpersonal. They are all about putting people in touch with specific people, and especially with people’s pain. Person-to-person is the way the Gospel was originally communicated. Person-in-love-with-person, person-respecting-person, person-forgiving-person, person-touching-person, person-crying-with-person, person-hugging-person, person-hurting-person: that’s where the Divine Presence is so beautifully revealed. And from the concrete and personal it universalizes! What is true here and now is true everywhere and always. Richard Rohr

## SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs 105-108.. . To order contact [Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 125-128.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005. Pgs. 106-109.