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Father Cantalamessa on How to Live Vacation

Pontifical Household Preacher on This Sunday's Gospel

ROME, JULY 21, 2006 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of a commentary on the Gospel passage of this Sunday's liturgy, by Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pontifical Household.

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Come Away to Rest a While

In the Gospel passage Jesus invites his disciples to separate themselves from the crowd and their work and to go away with him to a "lonely place."

He taught them to do what he did: to balance action and contemplation, to go from contact with people to secret and regenerating dialogue with oneself and with God.

The theme is of great importance and timeliness. The rhythm of life has acquired a speed that surpasses our capacity to adapt.

The scene in "Modern Times" of Charlie Chaplain absorbed in the assembly line is the exact image of this situation. In this way one loses the capacity for critical separation which allows one to exercise dominion over the flow, often chaotic and disordered, of circumstances and daily experiences.

Jesus, in the Gospel, never gives the impression of being agitated by hurry. Sometimes he even wastes time: All look for him and he does not let himself be found, absorbed as he is in prayer. Sometimes, as in our Gospel passage, he even invites his disciples to lose time with him: "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." He often recommends that one not be harassed. Our bodies benefit so much from such "respites."

Among these "pauses" are precisely the summer vacations which we are living. For the majority of people, they are the only occasion to rest a while, to converse in a relaxed manner with their own spouse, to play with the children, to read a good book or to contemplate nature in silence; in short, to relax. To make of holidays a more frenetic time than in the rest of the year would be to ruin them.

To the commandment: "Remember to keep the Sabbath holy," one should add: "Remember to keep vacations holy." "Stop (literally: vacate, take a vacation!) Know that I am God," says God in the Psalms.

A simple thing to do might be to enter a mountain church or chapel at a time when it is empty, and to spend some time there "apart," alone with ourselves, before God.

This need for times of solitude and listening is posed in a special way to those who proclaim the Gospel and to animators of the Christian community, who must stay constantly in contact with the source of the Word that

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they must transmit to their brothers. The laity should rejoice, not feel neglected, every time that their priest leaves for a time for intellectual and spiritual recharging.

It must be said that Jesus' vacation with the apostles was of brief duration, because the people, seeing him going away, went ahead of him on foot to the place of disembarkation. But Jesus does not get irritated with the people who give him no peace, but is "moved," seeing them abandoned to themselves, as sheep without a shepherd," and he begins to "teach them many things."

This shows us that one must be ready to interrupt even one's deserved rest in face of a situation of grave need of one's neighbor.

One cannot, for example, abandon to his fate, or leave in a hospital, an elderly person one is in charge of, to enjoy one's vacation without disturbances. We cannot forget the many persons whose loneliness they have not chosen, but suffer, and not for a week or a month, but for years, perhaps throughout their lives.

Also here there is room for a small practical suggestion: To look around and see if there is some one to help feel less alone in life, with a visit, a call, an invitation to see them one day in the place of vacation -- whatever the heart and circumstances suggest.

[Translation and adaptation from the Italian by ZENIT]

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