

“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while” (Mk. 6:31) ...With these words, Jesus invites the apostles to get away from the routine of ministry (work), to rest, to relax, to recoup and to recharge their batteries. Jesus recognizes that after their period of intensive apostolic labors, the twelve need to be refreshed once again in His presence and in their fellowship with one another. Deserted place recalls the desert, a place of testing but also a place of solitude and retreat where God’s people withdraw from the world for special intimacy with Him. Jesus not only called them to be a disciple (be with Him) but also called them to be an apostle (sent out on a mission) to proclaim the ‘Goodnews’ to all nations. Unless one spends time with Him, one can find it rather challenging to face the world and bear fruit of the one’s calling. So, to be with Him remains a requirement of fruitful apostleship. We can get caught up every day in a whirlpool of work. We have many things to do that even twenty-four hours do not seem to be enough. Life can become a burden rather than a free gift of God to be lived in His service. We can be more inclined to live to work rather than work to live. It’s a humble invitation of Jesus for all of us too, “come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while.” Work is important but relationships are the most important.

Christian life is a continuous passage from the presence of God to the presence of people and back to God again. We should allow God the opportunity to speak to us and recharge us with spiritual energy and strength by setting aside enough time for Him to speak to us and for us to speak to Him. We are familiar how St. Francis of Assisi time and again withdrew himself to a deserted place (caves, forests) for solitude in order to know himself and to deepen his relationship with God. Recourse to our own deserted place will help us to find who we are before God and the other and replenish with the energy we need to be an instrument of God’s love and a missionary disciple wherever we live. The council of ‘Our Lady of the Angels’ of Western Canada gathered this month at Mount St. Francis, Cochrane, to report what we have done in service of our brothers and sisters in our roles. It was not only a time of reporting and discussion but also a time for us to relate and strengthen our relationship with God and each other in the silence of the nature that retreat house provides. There are a lot of expectations and demands to be met, not only coming from the members of our fraternities but also by society in general but one can only do as much as one has the strength; both physical and spiritual. Little or more, but doing them with love for God and others and with a Franciscan spirit is what matters the most. And in order to do this, we all need to come away to our own deserted place...let us find one that truly leads us to God.

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