

Action and contemplation now grow together into one life and one unity. They become two aspects of the same thing. Action is charity looking outward to other men, and contemplation is charity drawn inward to its own divine source. Action is the stream, and contemplation is the spring. The spring remains more important than the stream, for the only thing that really matters is for love to spring up inexhaustibly from the infinite abyss of Christ and of God....the man of simple intention works in an atmosphere of prayer: that is to say he is recollected. ***His spiritual reserves are not all poured out into his work, but stored where they belong, in the depths of his being, with his God.*** He is detached from his work and from its results. Only a man who works purely for God can at the same time do a very good job and leave the results of the job to God alone. (Thomas Merton, No Man Is an Island, pp 70-72) [Italics mine]

The other day, I stumbled across this quotation from Thomas Merton that I had inscribed in an old prayer journal of mine. The words have as much meaning today as they did when I wrote them five years ago. In my spiritual journey, I have learned many times, that God calls me to work; but he does not necessarily call me to experience the results of that work. He calls me to action but only to action that is grounded in my own firm presence in His heart.

Summer is a time of slowing down in the lives of most churches. It is a bit of Sabbath in the midst of busy Christian lives. The calendar is sparse, some groups do not meet and attendance at Sunday services can slow down. This is not a bad thing. We need to experience the rhythm of work and Sabbath in our corporate lives. Sabbath time is a time for rejuvenation, rest and a new realization of our dependence on God.

Rejuvenation comes through resting in God. We talk about resting in God all the time, but what does that really mean? Merton suggests that we truly rest in God when we are able to abandon any manifestation of an outcome of our works. We are resting in God when we are able to leave the results of our work in God's hands...when we don't necessarily have to see those results. If we are resting in God, then we can step back and let God bring about the outcome. If we are resting in God, then we will always have the spiritual reserves necessary to do any kind of work to which God might call us.

This is exciting news for us as we head to the fall and to the anticipated launching of our new outreach effort with Mishawaka High School students (see article elsewhere in this newsletter). We have discerned that God is calling us to this work, and so we must be faithful. We must also be prepared to make sure that we are taking the necessary steps to remain in the heart of God. To this end, at the same time, we have decided that our Adult Education Forum should focus on the discipline of prayer. If we are grounded in a solid life of prayer, I think we will find that resting in God will come more easily for us. Watch next month's newsletter for a more detailed explanation of this upcoming Adult Education Forum.

Meanwhile, God's blessings and peace during this Sabbath time,

Mother Susan+