

18th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle A

July 31, 2011

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Being Connected

A little over a year ago, I got a new cell phone – a Verizon Droid.

The Droid keeps me connected with people wherever I am. I can place and respond to calls quickly.

I can send and receive text messages and emails. I can get on the Internet, do a Google search for a restaurant, or get directions to your home on the GPS.

Many of you have phones like this and you know exactly what I am talking about. There's a real advantage in being connected like this.

Jesus Disconnects to Connect

On the other hand, one of today's writers, a Jesuit priest named James Martin, speaks of the importance of disconnecting.

Martin says that we need to disconnect in order to connect. Isn't that what Jesus does in today's gospel?

Jesus is sad because he has just heard of the death of his cousin John the Baptist. And so, *"he withdraws to a deserted place by himself."*

So Jesus disconnects – from his ministry and from people. Why does he do this?

Jesus disconnects in order to connect. He needs to connect with his inner self, with his feelings and his sense of mission, and with the Father.

And what happens is that by his disconnecting, Jesus gets the energy to connect again with others. The passage says that a lot of people show up and he is able to respond to them.

And then his disconnecting also enables him to connect again with his disciples. They want to send the people away.

But Jesus is able to draw the best out of them. He moves them to utilize their own resources and take care of the people themselves.

So, Jesus disconnects in order to connect. His connecting with himself and the Father empowers him to connect again with others in a positive way.

We Disconnect to Connect

It is easy to say that we also need to disconnect in order to connect, but it is not always easy to do this.

I imagine this is especially challenging for parents with young children or for any adults with long commutes to work and lots of responsibilities. But I want to hold out for this: that we need some time, if it is only five minutes a day, to turn off the cell phones and be alone with ourselves and with God.

We need this time to disconnect – maybe alone in your bedroom, in your car, taking a walk, or in the chapel at Saint Margaret's. This disconnecting helps us to connect with our inner self and with how Jesus moves us to respond to the stresses or upsets or relationship troubles weighing on us.

When we disconnect, we can just be quiet or we might read just a few verses of Scripture or a page of a reflective book. But in a way that works for us, we need to do this disconnecting.

We are also to do this here at Sunday Mass. It is intentional that we are asked to turn off our cell phones here.

We do this disconnect so as to be able to connect with both God and the larger community. Here the Word of God guides us and the Eucharist nourishes us as a community.

The Word connects us as a community with our resources and gifts, much as Jesus does with the disciples today. It draws us out of ourselves to connect with the larger community of the Church and society and the entire world.

It awakens us from a narrow sense of self and of God that we will probably have if we just pray alone at home. It connects us to a fuller, maybe even more accurate view of life.

And then the Eucharist connects us to Jesus in a way that nothing else can do. It is Jesus, present, strengthening us to act in a positive and life-giving way – like he does with the disciples today.

Conclusion

So, disconnect in order to connect.

Easy words to remember, maybe not so easy to do! But, important, very important to do!