

“Where Your Treasure is, there Will Your Heart be Also”

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal.
But store up treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal.
for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”*
(Matthew 6:19-21)

It hardly seems possible, but here we are at Labor Day Weekend! Labor Day always represents a time of transition... the harvest is upon us; ... summer days turn to autumn; ...and even if we're not returning to school, there's a shift in the rhythm of our daily activity. On this weekend – rather than share a Homily – I invite us to reflect a bit on our “labor” – not just our paid work, but our activity, our “busy-ness” – especially on the *balance* in our lives between work and rest.

A few years ago, a number of us joined together in a study of Wayne Muller's book: *Sabbath*. The core message of Muller's book is expressed in the line from Matthew's Gospel:

“...where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”
(Matthew 6:19-21)

Drawing on insights from Muller's book, I invite us all to reflect quietly on the importance of Sabbath-time in our lives...

Muller tells us:

“Whatever we place at the center of our lives will get the bulk of our care and attention. This is not esoteric teaching, but simple physics. If we love our children more than anything, they will get the best of our attention. If we love success, our career will get the majority of our time. If we love money we will spend the greater portion of our care and worry on the accumulation of wealth.”

Where is your heart – your center – at this point in your life...?

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Muller goes on:

“In the relentless busyness of modern life, we have lost the rhythm between work and rest.

“All life requires a rhythm of rest. There is a rhythm in our waking activity and the body’s need for sleep. There is a rhythm in the way day dissolves into night, and night into morning. There is a rhythm as the active growth of spring and summer is quieted by the necessary dormancy of fall and winter. There is a tidal rhythm, a deep, eternal conversation between the land and the great sea. In our bodies, the heart perceptibly rests after each life-giving beat; the lungs rest between the exhale and the inhale.”

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“In our drive for success we are seduced by the promises more: more money, more recognition, more satisfaction, more love, more information, more influence, more possessions, more security. Even when our intentions are noble and our efforts sincere — even when we dedicate our lives to the service of others — the corrosive pressure of frantic overactivity can nonetheless cause suffering in ourselves and others.”

These are challenging words... applied even to activity of service... of ministry.... .

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To illustrate the point, Muller quotes Thomas Merton:

“There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence... [and that is] activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence.

“To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb, to violence.

“The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

Powerful words...

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Mueller goes on:

“The problem is not simply that we work too much, the problem is that we are working for the wrong reward. We are paid in the wrong currency. We reward the fruits of our labor and the sweat of our brow with money, goods, and services. We need to seek instead a more fertile, healing balance of payments — some of our pay in money, and some of our pay in time.

“What if we were to expand our definition of wealth to include those things that grow only in time — time to walk in the park, time to take a nap, time to play with children, to read a good book, to dance, to put our hands in the garden, to cook playful meals with friends, to paint, to sing, to meditate, to keep a journal. What if we were to live, for even a few hours, without spending money, cultivating time instead as our most precious resource?”

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“Our willingness to rest depends on what we believe we will find there. At rest we come face-to-face with the essence of life. If we believe life is fundamentally good, we will seek out rest as a taste of that goodness. If we believe life is fundamentally bad or flawed, we will be reluctant to quiet ourselves, afraid of meeting the darkness that resides in things — or in ourselves.

“Sabbath time can be a revolutionary challenge to the violence of overwork, mindless accumulation, and the endless multiplication of desires, responsibilities, and accomplishments. Sabbath is a way of being in time where we remember who we are, remember what we know, and taste the gifts of spirit and eternity.

“Like a path through the forest, Sabbath creates a marker for ourselves so, if we are lost, we can find our way back to our center. “Remember the Sabbath” means “Remember that everything you have received is a blessing. Remember to delight in your life, in the fruits of your labor. Remember to stop and offer thanks for the wonder of it.” Remember, as if we would forget. Indeed, the assumption is that we will forget. And history has proven that, given enough time, we will.”

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And finally:

“The story is told of a South American tribe that went on a long march, day after day, when all of a sudden they would stop walking, sit down to rest for a while, and then make camp for a couple of days before going any further. They explained that they needed the time of rest so that their souls could catch up with them.”

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Sabbath shalom!
Amen!

(quotations from: Muller, Wayne Sabbath ©2005, Bantam)