

HOMILY – Father Jim Carini
July 3, 2011
St. Matthew Church, Tolland, CT

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest”

I read recently that this past October Spain held its first annual siesta championship in Madrid. They wanted to revive the long-held Spanish tradition of taking a nap after lunch. Those participating slept on blue sofas in the middle of a shopping mall. There was a similar attempt in the U. S. back in 2006 in the Mall of America in Minneapolis. It failed because of the lack of participants among the busy shoppers. I guess we Americans have a different idea of being a champion.

However, most of us know the benefits of a power nap. Medical experts tell us that a 15 – 20 minute nap can result in less stress, more patience, better reflexes, increased learning, more efficiency and overall better health.

Now when Jesus talks about coming to him to find rest, he isn't offering us a 20-minute power nap. He means a spiritual pause and a place to rest and be refreshed in order to be fortified in our faith. For some, such a pause seems to be a waste of time and impractical, a mark of laziness. Yet, those pauses are as necessary to our lives as breathing. There is great wisdom in our Church teaching that obliges us to make a weekly pause by worshipping on the Lord's day. Besides our need to give thanks to God, such a spiritual pause is necessary for the growth of faith, but we know how resistant we can be when we are told to do something for our own good. We have to be convinced and make a free choice to change our lives.

Last week, I was away for my annual retreat. Clergy and religious are expected to take such a pause because of the very nature of their vocation. How can we expect to lead others in the spiritual life if we do not take care of our own? I had a wonderful week. First, I was away from the office and the ordinary routine of parish life. My cell phone was turned off

and I didn't check any e-mails. I followed the guidance of a very wise and kind priest, also a Father Jim. There was total silence and plenty of time for prayer, daily Mass, time for confession, delicious meals, time for exercise (by biking for me) and more restful sleep. Being obliged by canon law to make such a retreat doesn't bother me, because I am convinced of its benefits. Besides, it is so good and enjoyable.

The invitation to pause and rest was not just unique to Jesus' teaching. It was deeply rooted in the spirituality of Israel. In Psalm 46 there is a powerful invitation that our ancestors in the faith heard often. It is in verse 10: "*Be still and know that I am God.*" I have begun many a retreat with just those words. In fact, if I were to sum up the major theme of this past retreat, those words describe it so well.

"Be still" can be interpreted in many ways: "*Give in!*" "*Let be!*" Notice that the invitation is not simply to rest, as in "*Take a load off*" or "*Put up your feet,*" but to rest so as *to know* and *to learn*. That's why a retreat or other types of spiritual pauses are not the same as vacations.

Now while you may not be able or choose to go on a retreat experience for any length of time, be aware of the Lord's invitation to you to pause in him. Spend some quiet time with him. Use Psalm 46. You may be surprised at what can happen in your life when you pause in the Lord for a moment's rest to learn from him. "*Be still and know that I am God.*"