



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

July 6, 2021

### DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

After spending two weeks on holidays, I can confirm that it is really nice to have more hours of sleep, to spend more time with recreation activities, gardening, watching movies, reading just for fun, or driving around to see more of this beautiful province.

Here you are a widely acknowledged evidence: we all need opportunities to refill our souls and to regenerate. It's true in our active working years, but it is also the case if you are retired. If we yearn to **“flourish”**, to **“still bear fruit in old age”** and to **“stay fresh and green”** (Psalm 92:13-14), we need to find the best ways to attain physical and spiritual renewal regardless of our age or the load of our duties.

I recognize that it is more likely to find *“me time”* when we are not bound to an employer or working hours; when we are parents in empty nests. However, we have the tendency to overwhelm ourselves even when we are the ‘master’ of our own schedules. I found that we need the wisdom and counsel of the divine Spirit **“to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”** (Psalm 90:12)

And I also found that the quiet time with God is essential in order to learn scheduling our time well here on earth. While each one of us are different in energy level and capabilities, there are some general rules that apply to all of us. And this is the necessity of taking some break, to rest, to do something that can replenish our souls. If it's in the nature, go, and meet the Almighty as you enjoy the beauties of this planet. If it's gardening, make sure you don't overdo it. I experienced that it can be hard on joints and muscles. 😊

But whatever we like doing, let's not forget about intentionally and consciously meeting God through prayers and reading the Scriptures. I believe it has several benefits for us. It opens us to hear when the Holy One wants to say something to us as we try to understand those old-old passages that are still living and empowering. Connecting to God in prayers and Scriptures have the permanent ability to shape us, and to give us guidance as we arrive to crossroads of our lives. If we don't take time and courage to inquire the Word of God through reading and listening as we lift up our hearts to God, we don't give a chance to ourselves to learn what David formulated with these words: **“In my alarm I said, “I am cut off from your sight!” Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help.”** (Psalm 31:22)

So, as we tackle with chores, missions and life's challenges, or we feel *“cut off from God's sight”*, let us remember that God waits for us and ready to hear us. And nothing can give us more refreshment and wholeness than finding out that it's true.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Spending Time with God

*Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

Luke 5:16

### READ Luke 5:12-16

A River Runs Through It is Norman Maclean's masterful story of two boys growing up in western Montana with their father, a Presbyterian Minister. On Sunday mornings, Norman and his brother, Paul, went to church where they heard their father preach. Once Sunday evening rolled around, there was another service and their father would preach again. But between those two services, they were free to walk the hills and streams with him "while he unwound between services." It was an intentional withdrawing on their father's part to "restore his soul and be filled again to overflowing for the evening sermon."

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is seen teaching multitudes on hillsides and cities, and healing the sick and diseased who were brought to Him. All this interaction was in line with the Son of Man's mission "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). But it's also noted that He "often withdrew to lonely places" (5:16). His time there was spent communing with the Father, being renewed and restored to step back once more into His mission.

In our faithful efforts to serve, it's good for us to remember that Jesus often withdrew. If this practice was important for Jesus, how much more so for us? May we regularly spend time with our Father, who can fill us again to overflowing. – By **John Blase**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Thank You for the reminder, Father, of my need for time spent with You. I need Your grace and strength to renew my often-weary soul. Amen.**

What comes to mind when you think of a "lonely" place? When and where can you withdraw to simply spend time with the Father?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Due to His popularity, Jesus intentionally withdrew to "lonely places" to pray (Luke 5:16). This may be why He didn't want the man healed of leprosy to tell anyone (v. 14). However, "the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came" (v. 15).

In the book of Luke, we clearly see that Jesus' time spent with His Father was a priority. He consistently went away to pray before major events such as when He chose the twelve apostles (6:12-16), before predicting His death (9:18), during the transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared to discuss Jesus' departure (vv. 28-31), before His teaching on prayer (11:1), before His arrest (22:41), while being crucified (23:34), and just before He died (v. 46). – By **Julie Schwab**

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