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Rest

(Part Three)

What follows is a continuation of our last newsletter's probe into the nature and benefits of rest. The first observation is this: When we rest, we naturally occupy space and measure time in a very particular manner. And each of us appears to inhabit space and mark time somewhat differently. We all seem to exhibit, that is, a certain style or distinctive know-how in this regard.

Immediately, the question arises: Where is it that we find rest? One illustrative, useful image that comes to mind is of a water lily serenely floating at rest on a pond's surface. The image reminds us that resting emerges, occurs, and happens in a particular space, a defined place, a concrete environment. In that environment, we cease to act, do, work, and thus exert physical and emotional effort. We free ourselves from worry, anxiety, and a sense of vulnerability, for in this space, we can pause, settle down, and experience a sense of arrival. As we surrender to this place, we find ourselves as though landing, letting go, and thus allowing ourselves to be supported by this place's very foundations.

Spaces, then, are pauses that can ground us for a brief moment, an hour, a day, or longer. These pauses constitute and define our style of rest. Our typical response is to feel safe, secure, supported, and belonging to that space. We feel welcomed and at home. In addition, the space elicits a readiness to yield to the support bearing our weight beneath us, as it were. We feel free enough to let ourselves be held and embraced by the space as we likewise experience a release from our addiction to continual striving and give ourselves over to the place of rest. Letting go thus becomes our highest priority and it is here, in this space, that we locate a place in which to dwell, to abide.

More and more, as we yield to the support of our space and surrender to our environment, we come to greater rest. Any space can become a resting place. We may find rest upon a mat, a bed, in a chair, on a couch, on the grass or ground, on a bench, or in the water. We rest on or upon a thing, in a place or through some person. By this process, our bodies effortlessly, confidently, and trustingly allow themselves to be supported by their entire environment of people, events, and things. The invitation to surrender deeper and deeper to the space, the place, the "where of the moment," offers an opportunity for our bodies, minds, and spirits to sink into rest. There, in that space and place, we bring ourselves into peaceful harmony with the world around us.

Rest is also facilitated by a particular time, a particular style of using time. The next great question, then, is *when does one rest?*

We begin to rest at that moment when we stop getting ready to do this and that. And we will find rest primarily when we surrender to the now, the present moment, the present reality. In rest, we abandon ourselves and give ourselves over to the present moment.

Moreover, in moving from doing to being, we stop and pause. When living in the awareness of the present moment, it is as if we are being massaged by a certain kind of time. When we are no longer on the move, no longer hurrying, racing, pushing in a battle against time, we start to let go of this stance toward time and assume a more relaxed flow with the present. We no longer become possessed by the past or the future, and time slowly disappears as we give ourselves over to the present moment. In the present, we are undisturbed by time, at ease with time, serene with time, and at peace with time.

Slowly we adopt the stance of simply resting in time. In this resting time—resting in the present moment—we grow unaware of time. There is no beginning or end, no cognizance of clock time, and time just disappears. Because of this attitude toward time, we feel we have time enough, ample time to give ourselves over to rest. We feel we can linger with time, dwell in the present moment, find rest, achieve rest, and fully experience rest. The pace of nature's sights and sounds nurtures our ability to trust enough so that we may let go of time and simply reside in the present moment. Fully aware of the now, we are called to rest in time.

Supported by a space in which we feel at home and by a sense of time in the present moment, we are able to rest. As we allow ourselves to feel supported by our environment of people, events, and things, we enhance our ability to rest in our bodies and in the sanctuaries of our inner selves. As we grow more capable of being ourselves, we respond with greater ease by resting in our internal experience of peace with ourselves and others. From this position toward rest, we come to dwell in the now as we submerge into our innermost selves. We become self-possessed and take up our everyday lives more effortlessly while we lightly hold time and space.

Authentic rest is marked by effortlessness, a non-doing. This involves moving deeper and deeper into a gut feeling of physical ease here in the present moment and in an at-home space. As we stop trying, we simply let be. Likewise, we focus on our internal process and not on our external goals and results.

Resting, to repeat, is facilitated by effortlessness. At home with ourselves, we are able to dwell in the now as we let go of all our strenuous efforts to “make it all happen.” In effortless rest, we abandon ourselves to the now as we welcome ourselves back to our place at home in the present, a present in which we find rest.

But in order to rest, we need to remain fully and consciously aware, ever able to notice, recognize, and attend to our style of living. We must be able to pay attention to how we are doing and what we are doing. We must likewise pay attention to how we relate to our

environment, that is, how we maintain sensitive contact with our environment. By practicing detachment, release, and surrender, we will be able to grow in inner strength, experience a more profound internal peace, and enjoy a calm vitality. Our physical ease will flow and our energy will continue to sustain us as we conduct our lives in a more restful way. From a perspective focusing on rest, we find ourselves in a better position to allow people, events, and things to be as they are.

Rest is a critical disposition that makes possible the unfolding of the human experience of hospitality. Rest helps us become centered, grounded, and connected to ourselves, others, and God. Living a style of human life from a position of spiritual, formative rest allows us to pray ceaselessly. In this way, we are always at prayer.

Anchoring our everyday living in rest—even as rest provides the grounding to be and to do—creates a style of living that enables us to welcome people in our lives. What results is the capacity to make room in our lives for ourselves, for others, and for God. We recognize rest as a foundational dimension of our lives. In addition, we see rest as a way of keeping it simple in life and as a path to tranquility. What rest provides to our ordinary lives is an ability to nurture a sense of ease, gratitude, peace, and prayer.