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Rest in God – The Spirituality of Rest

Počitek v Bogu – duhovnost počitka

Abstract: Rest does not seem to have the same prominent place in Christian spirituality as prayer and the celebration of the sacraments, since there is almost no direct scientific research on it. Is it really self-evident that a Christian rests and does not need to be encouraged to do so? In our time, when there is much talk of overwork and burnout, it is necessary to explore this area so as to shed light on it from the perspective of the Christian spiritual life. Too often a mentality prevails that heaven has to be earned through constant work and that we never do enough. This raises the question of whether Christians have a correct understanding of Jesus and the good news he brought into this world, as well as of his life and ministry, which should reflect in their lives and ministries. The author puts forward the thesis that a Christian cannot live his spirituality fully if there is no place for rest or rest in God. In fact, rest is the identifying mark of authentic Christian spirituality, which always includes a spirituality of rest. In the article, the author first shows how the understanding of work as merit hinders the relationship with God. Then he illustrates how being with Jesus Christ is a source of rest. In the last section, he briefly reviews different forms of rest in God that make it possible to live a spirituality of rest.

Keywords: Christian spirituality, Human being, work, rest, forms of rest, spirituality of rest

Izvleček: *Zdi se, da počitek v krščanski duhovnosti nima tako pomembnega mesta kot molitev in obhajanje zakramentov, saj o njem ni skoraj nobenih neposrednih znanstvenih raziskav. Ali je res samoumevno, da kristjan počiva, in ga k temu ni treba spodbujati? Dandanes, ko se veliko govori o preobremenjenosti in celo izgorelosti, je treba raziskati tudi to področje in ga osvetliti z vidika krščanskega duhovnega življenja. Prepogosto prevladuje miselnost, da si je nebesa treba zaslužiti z nenehnim delom in da nikoli ne naredimo dovolj. Pri tem se postavlja vprašanje, ali kristjani pravilno razumejo Jezusa in dobro novico, ki jo je prinesel na ta svet, njegovo življenje in služenje, kar bi se moralo odražati v njihovem življenju in služenju. Avtor postavlja tezo, da kristjan ne more polno živeti svoje duhovnosti, če v njej ni prostora za počitek ali počitek v Bogu. Pravzaprav je to razpoznavno znamenje pristine krščanske duhovnosti, ki vključuje duhovnost počitka. Avtor v članku najprej pokaže, kako razumevanje dela kot zasluge ovira odnos z Bogom. Nato prikaže, kako je bivanje z Jezusom Kristusom vir počitka. V zadnjem poglavju na kratko predstavi različne oblike počitka v Bogu, ki omogočajo živeti duhovnost počitka.*

Ključne besede: *krščanska duhovnost, človek, delo, počitek, oblike počitka, duhovnost počitka*

Introduction

I often recall the words of a friend who said to me, »Find time to rest now, before they say to you, 'Rest in peace!'« I also remember the thought of a doctor who told me, »There are many in the cemetery who have been convinced that they are irreplaceable«. I am probably not the only one who has trouble finding enough rest: every day, once a week and in the summer time. This is probably a common problem for many people, because we are all caught up in various commitments, where it seems that there has never been enough done and there is still so much to do. Even Jesus experienced that many were looking for Him (Mk 1:37). It often happened that in a secluded place where He wanted to retreat from the crowds, He found the crowds looking for Him again. He took pity on them and began to teach and heal them (Mt 14:13, 34-36; Mk 6:53-56). And if we want to be like Jesus Christ, we too must always be working, for He said that just as the Father is always working, so also is He (Jn 5:16-36).

Rest does not seem to have the same prominent place in Christian spirituality as prayer and the celebration of the sacraments, since there is almost no direct scientific research on it.¹ Is it really self-evident that a Christian rests and does not need to be encouraged to do so? But in our time, when there is much talk of overwork and even burnout (Klun 2020, 282–285), and it seems that everyone strives for their own piece of luck (Pevc Rozman 2019, 24), it is also necessary to explore this area and to shed light on it from the perspective of the Christian spiritual life. Too often a mentality that heaven has to be earned through constant work and that we never do enough prevails. It is necessary to make as many sacrifices as possible, for only in this way does one redeem himself from the debt of his sins and gain eternal life. This raises the question of whether Christians have a correct understanding of Jesus and the good news He brought into this world, as well as of His life and ministry, which should reflect in their lives and ministries.

I put forward the thesis that a Christian cannot live his spirituality fully if there is no place for rest or rest in God. In fact, this is the identifying

1 Only Gerald O'Mahony (2018) speaks directly about the spirituality of rest in his short article.



mark of authentic Christian spirituality, which always includes a spirituality of rest.

1 Work as merit hinders relationship with God

Jesus turned many of the beliefs of the faithful Jews of His day, and of all of us who listen to Him today, upside down with His proclamations of the kingdom of God. Among them is the belief that we earn merit with God by working. By faithfully fulfilling God's law, one would become righteous and deserve to come before God and share in eternal life.² Although »the Church has repeatedly taught that we are justified not by our own works or efforts, but by the grace of the Lord, who always takes the initiative« (Francis 2018, 52), sadly, some Christians repeatedly fall into various forms of false Pelagianism in order to attain justification »by their own efforts« (57). Pope Francis explains this very well in his exhortation *Rejoice and Be Glad* (47–62). Of course, our work has great value when it comes from a trusting, humble and conscious collaboration with God's grace, for it is through it that we sanctify ourselves and the world (56) and build his kingdom together with God (Roszak and Dorocki 2020, 115–119).

In many of His parables, Jesus reveals how work alone, because of its merits, has its weaknesses that prevent man from being able to understand God and enter His kingdom.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the firstborn is utterly disappointed with the father for having pity on the younger son who had squandered his wealth, welcoming him, restoring his dignity and preparing a great feast, and rejoicing over his return. He was convinced that the father had thus shown how indifferent he was to all his righteousness and merits, and so refused to enter the father's joy (Lk 15:11-32). Similarly, in the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd rejoices and prepares a feast when he finds it (15:4-6). He does not do this for those who listen to his voice and do not get lost, that is, live obediently, righteously. They probably felt deceived

2 This belief is very clearly contradicted by the apostle Paul, who emphasizes that a person is saved by faith in Jesus Christ and not by works alone (Rom 3:27; 4:13; Gal 3) (Matjaž 2020).



by this. A similar thing happens when the drachma is found (15:8-9). In the same way, the workers in the vineyard who had worked for a full twelve hours felt cheated, when at the end of the day they were given equal pay to those who had come at the last hour (Mt 20:1-14).

All of faithful ones were convinced that they had been wronged. Such treatment is not just according to the logic of this world, where justice is understood in legal language: to each his due or deserved, but Jesus represents the justice of God, who is love and full of mercy, and of His kingdom, which is not of this world and came into the world through Jesus.

Of course, Jesus emphasizes that works are important and so He himself works, as His Father works (Jn 5). He makes it clear that not only will one be saved who calls on Him (Mt 7:21) and listens to Him (Mt 7:26), but it is also necessary to put His word into practice (Mt 7:24) as well as to do good works to anyone in need (Mt 25:31-45). But without Him, no one can do anything, just as a young branch cannot exist and bear fruit without a firm connection to the vine (Jn 15:1-9).

It is necessary, therefore, to keep both in mind: the work in addition to the connection with Him. Anyone who does not realize that he can work only because God himself enables him to do so is caught up in the logic of this world, i.e. that work is a way of earning a wage. Thus one falls into the trap of believing that a relationship with God, His love and forgiveness, eternal life with Him, can also be earned. One cannot see that everything is a free gift of the infinite love of God, who loves each individual as His own child, because he is the fruit of His love, created in God's image, chosen by His free choice (Francis 2018, 52-56).

If we read carefully the conclusion of the parables of the lost drachma, the sheep and the son in Luke (15), which speak of the danger of merit, we can see how the Father's love is emphasized. God's joy is complete when man allows himself to be found in his lostness (Celarc 2020, 403-407). Before Luke the Evangelist begins to pass on these parables, he says: »The tax collectors and the sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking His company to hear what He had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them'.« (Lk 15:1-2) Jesus tells these parables to those who considered themselves righteous and



relied on their work according to the law, that is, on their own merit. They were unable to see that their righteousness was not merely their own merit, but a free gift of God's love and mercy. He alone made it possible for them. But because they did not admit this to themselves, they became hard and merciless to all those who were unable to live as righteously as they did. The workers who were hired to work in the vineyard at the beginning of the day fell into a similar trap. At the end of the day, they didn't see it as a gift, and so they couldn't afford to let others who had only worked for an hour get the same payment as them.

So what is it that can help people open their eyes to see how everything is a free gift of God's love, and become like their heavenly Father (Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36)?

When Jesus explains the kingdom of God, He uses the following parable: »This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.« (Mk 4:26-28) The kingdom of God, then, does not depend on human work alone (Roszak 2020, 8–11), for example, from preparing the soil and sowing the seeds. Man also participates in it by sleeping, that is, by resting. The question is what this rest represents, so that it will enable him to see the fruit of his labour as a gift of the Kingdom of God and therefore to become a gift giver himself, living in solidarity with all humanity (Čović 2020, 309) and being filled with mercy when joining the Father's joy at finding what was lost.

The Jews, especially the Pharisees and scribes, were very strict in keeping the commandment of complete rest on the Sabbath. They often took offence at Jesus and accused Him of ignoring them and healing people even on Sabbath (Mt 12:9-14; Mk 3:1-6; Lk 6:6-11). They also accused the disciples of not keeping the regulations of rest (Mt 12:1-2).

How is it that these very same people, who strictly kept the commandment of rest, rejected Jesus' good news of the Father and His kingdom so much and ended up condemning Him to death with the chief priests? Is it that all rest is not helpful in becoming like the Father of Jesus Christ?



2 Rest – being with Jesus Christ

Only the evangelist Mark reports how Jesus sent the disciples, who had returned joyfully from their missionary mission, to rest: »You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves.« (Mk 6:31-32)

Jesus must have rejoiced in all that His disciples experienced, but He focuses their attention on resting, not so much on recounting what they had experienced. In this way, He wants to help them to become aware of their physical and mental fatigue and of the need for physical and mental rest. At the same time, it warns them of the danger of being trapped in activism, where the most important thing is the results one achieves and the feeling that they are the absolute protagonists and that everything depends on them (Stegu 2015, 519–522). In order not to fall into this trap, it is necessary to consciously stop. There is a need for physical rest, but also for rest of the heart. When Pope Francis (2021) explains this commission of Jesus, he stresses that it is not enough to »unplug«, but that one must »truly rest«, to return »to the heart of things: to stop, to remain in silence, to pray, so as not to go from the frenzy of work to the frenzy of times of relaxation. Jesus did not neglect the needs of the crowd, but each day, before anything else, He would withdraw in prayer, in silence, in intimacy with the Father.« (Francis 2021) The essence of the rest to which Jesus invites is, therefore, a time when one stops and renews in various ways one's relationship with the triune God.

In Matthew's Gospel (11:28-30) we see how Jesus promises rest to all who come to Him. He says to the gathered crowd, »come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.«

Jesus' first word in promising rest is a call, »come«. He encourages His listeners to move, to get on the road. The greatest mistake is to remain in a state of weariness and heaviness, to accept it as normal or that there is no other way to live in this world. It seems natural to many people to be



always busy and to have no time for rest. Many times a Christian says that he will rest in heaven, but in this world one has to work and earn heaven. Some even say that resting is a sign of laziness, which is one of the cardinal sins. Thus, many believe that a true Christian must be constantly busy. One can only rest on Sunday, the Lord's day. Even then, the day must be full of various events connected with the worship of God, so that time is not wasted in idleness.

Jesus wants to draw everyone out of the »quicksand« of constant activism and the conviction that it is God's will to be constantly active in any way, even through devotion. Of course, not every break from activity is the rest that Jesus promises. It is not enough to step out of the entrapment into the madness of work. That is why Jesus tells everyone clearly where to go, to whom to come, to whom to open oneself, whom to look at, whose hand to take, so that he may find the rest he needs: »Come to me!«

Jesus' promised rest can only be found in, with and through Him. St. Augustine also emphasizes this in his *Confessions* (I, 1) when he says: »our heart is restless until it rests in you.« Of course, Jesus often does not solve a person's problems through work and daily obligations, but rather strengthens him through His presence, removes anxiety and paralysing fear, and carries with Him the cross of everyday life. In this way, every burden becomes light with Jesus, as He promises in Mt 11:30 (Francis 2017).³ When one is personally connected to the Son, surrenders completely to His call (Vodičar and Stala 2019, 1092), accepts Him into one's daily mundane life even situations that tire and weigh one down. Through a true connection with Jesus there comes a consolation and a vital resilience that only He can give.

Whoever is with Jesus and in Him restores and strengthens his dignity of God's childhood, for that person work is no longer a »tax« but a voluntary gift of collaboration with God. This is what Jesus is saying, among other things, when he asks Simon: »From whom do the kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from foreigners?« (Mt 17:25) When

3 Kierkegaard also strongly emphasised that the Christian's goal is to make his burden or suffering »light«, and this can only be achieved through a right relationship with God (Zalec 2020a, 4–9).



he answers that it is from foreigners, Jesus says to him, »Well then, the sons are exempt« (v. 26). This tells him that He and Peter, as children of God, do not have to pay a tax to God. Yet He tells him to go and catch a fish, take a coin out of it, and give it as a freewill offering for both of them. The story of Adam and Eve was interpreted by many at the time to mean that work was a tax or burden imposed as a punishment from God (Gen 3:17-19). But Jesus is saying here that God does not impose taxes on his children, so work is a voluntary contribution expected of a child of God, and no longer a tax (O'Mahony 2018, 42–43).

Jesus promises rest especially to those who »labour and are overburdened«. It is not just for the elect. He promises it to all who come to Him, as he did in Galilee, when the people before Him were above all simple, poor, sick, sinful, marginal, outcast, and excluded (Francis 2014). So to all those who are tired and overwhelmed by life, both those who find themselves in various difficult situations in life on the physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual levels, and those who are involved in the effort of everyday life in the context of their responsibilities. Jesus does not make demands on those who face fatigue and burdensomeness, but offers them His mercy and His comforting presence.

When He promises to give rest to all, He also gives the instruction: »Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.« (Mt 11:29) It is striking that He uses the image of a yoke, which the farmer used to harness the power of animals in his work. Jesus does not want to impose an extra yoke on anyone, but wants to help anyone who accepts it in the course of his daily life not to bear it alone. Anyone who accepts it in Christ as His gift and allows Him to help and teach him how to carry it receives the gift of rest. At the same time, the promise and the invitation are similar to a commandment, as Pope Francis (2014) explains. Whoever receives Christ's consolation and rest is thereby called to become consolation and rest for his brothers and sisters in the manner of Christ.

What kind of rest is this if one is called to serve others through it? This question can also be seen in the narrative of Mark's Gospel when he says that Jesus and His disciples could not rest as they wished. When Jesus sees the multitudes who have found them, He is overwhelmed with



compassion, and He rededicates himself to the people and begins to teach them (Mk 6:33-34). This seems to be a contradiction. Jesus tells them to rest, and then He works again. But in reality it is not so. Whoever learns to truly rest becomes capable of true compassion. Pope Francis therefore stresses: »[I]f we cultivate a contemplative outlook, we will carry out our activities without that rapacious attitude of those who want to possess and consume everything; if we stay in touch with the Lord and do not anesthetise the deepest part of ourselves, the things to do will not have the power to cause us to get winded or devour us.« (Francis 2021) So we need not be afraid of work. It is only necessary to purify the heart (Mk 7:14-23), from which comes our attitude to God, to ourselves, to others, to things and also to work. And rest seeks to enable us to do just that.

3 Different forms of rest in God

The writer of The Letter to the Hebrews stresses the connection between rest and faith: »We, however, who have faith, shall reach a place of rest.« (4:3) Therefore, rest is always connected to a relationship, with God. It is up to man to enter into and accept a relationship with Him. The writer is right to encourage believers: »We must therefore do everything we can to reach this place of rest.« (4:11) A thorough study by Pate (2014) makes it very clear that even in the Old Testament rest cannot be understood apart from its connection to God and his presence. Among other things, he shows that experiencing »God's presence is the way we enter into his rest« (4). Let us look at some of the ways or forms of rest to which God invites us through the Bible and the spiritual teachers of the Church.

3.1 Sleep

Sleep is a fundamental gift of God.⁴ Man cannot give it to himself (Ps 132:4). He can only take time for it and prepare himself for it. In his *Regula*, St. Benedict divided the monk's day into three parts, one part of which was eight hours of sleep (*Rule of Saint Benedict*, 8). St. Ignatius, in his *Spiritual*

4 It is in sleep, through dreams, that God often communicates with the individual. »Dreams are a distinctive biblical way of God's communication with man. God can use dreams as a warning, an encouragement or a (re)guidance.« (Skralovnik 2018, 711)



Exercises, also encourages those who do the spiritual exercises to take enough time to sleep, because one cannot enter into a deep relationship with God unless one also takes enough time to do so (Exx 84; 89). Sleep is therefore a sign of trust in God and of knowing that everything is God's free gift. The psalmist stresses that success in work does not depend on human action alone, »since he provides for his beloved as they sleep« (Ps 127:2; Nežič Glavica 2021, 9). Through God, man tastes the rest that he gives to all who trust in Him. Of course, this is all the more rest in God the more man enters into it with Him through the reading of the word of God, the examen, the prayer of thanksgiving and surrender, or some other form of prayer which helps him close the day with Him and surrender himself completely to His care.

3.2 Movement

Man is a creature that moves, that walks (Grassi 2020, 128–137). He is not made to stand still. To live means to move, to be on the road, to follow the inner voice, the inspirations, the call of God. The body cannot be healthy and function properly if it is not enabled to do that. Without movement, it cannot relax or rest properly. That is why it is of immense importance for an integrated life. Of course, it is necessary for everyone to move in harmony with their own body and with the rhythm of life, or the rhythm given by God, in which they live, move and exist (Acts 17:28). Whoever wishes to rest holistically avoids adrenalin sports, which lead from the madness of work to the madness of relaxation. They choose a movement (walking, jogging, swimming, stretching, dance, etc.) in which they can be consciously united with God, because they do not have to think, but can simply let go. When they can let thoughts come and go, as well as various sensations and feelings, emotions and inner spiritual moods, the awareness of the free gift of movement can gradually take place within them. The awareness of how God the Creator and Father endows them with every movement may fill them more and more with emotion, gratitude, consolation, joy and peace (Nežič Glavica 2021, 145–155; Platovnjak 2020b, 268–270). The rest that Jesus promises to all who come to Him can happen within Him. For many, pilgrimage is also a rest, when they make a pilgrimage to a holy place, alone or with others, to dedicate the time of walking to deepening their relationship with God.



3.3 Solitude

Jesus used solitude very often to share in the Father's rest (Mt 14:13; Mk 1:35, 45; Lk 4:42, etc.). In this way, He illustrated to His disciples what they needed to do to find rest. Often there is no other way than to cease one's normal activities and to withdraw from everyday relationships. The purpose of solitude is not to shut oneself in, but to be able, following Jesus' example, to be completely together with Him, with His and our Father. Often the decision to be alone requires a great deal of strength, courage and freedom, since many have a similar experience to that of Jesus, whom everyone sought and wanted something from Him for themselves or for others (Mk 1:37; Jn 6:26-27). He encourages His disciples to shut themselves in their room and be with the Father (Mt 6:6).

St. Ignatius encourages all those who do spiritual exercises to be alone with God and his word. Let them not hurry, but remain in one place, in one bodily posture or gesture, at one word of God, as long as this »satiates« them, gives them consolation, gives them rest (Exx 2; 76; 316). We can also go into solitude with others who are close to us or who share similar values. Jesus also sent His disciples to a solitary place to rest together. Some also go to spiritual retreats together in silence and stillness to rest in God with others.

3.4 Silence and stillness

Just as solitude is not self-explanatory for those involved in many relationships, neither is silence. At times, it is hard to find it in a world full of all kinds of sounds. However, it is crucial to find it. The easiest silence to find is inner silence, because everyone is free to choose it by being silent. Of course, it is easier to close one's lips than one's »brain«, because the latter is always active, constantly producing countless thoughts, and at the same time it is the biggest consumer of human energy. It is vital to »stop it«, to quiet the mind or to direct it to what gives it rest. Many are afraid of silence and stillness, for they are afraid of the thoughts that will come at an even greater volume (Job 13:19). However, without this, as already observed by Job (13:5), there can be no wisdom. Nor can one listen and hear fully unless one is also capable of silence. That is why God invites his people on multiple occasions to silence (Hab 2:20; Zeph 1:7; Rom 3:19) and to listening in stillness (Deut 27:8; Num 16:8; Deut 4:1; Deut 6:4; Ps 78:1;



81:14; Mt 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk 4:9; 12:29). Only this way can they grasp that in Him alone is the rest as well as everything they long for and need the most (Mk 7:14).

Silence opens the ears and heart to the word of God and enables it to bear much fruit in its season (Isa 55; Mt 13; Lk 8). It enables prayer, in which one pauses and enjoys in the presence of God (Muszala 2017, 3–20). This can so overwhelm him that all words, all thoughts, all images fall away. It is enough to sit at his feet (Lk 10:38–42), before his face, to look and enjoy in his gaze, his mercy, his forgiveness and his tender love (Larrañaga 1993, 111–122).

When a person falls silent and listens to the quiet and unobtrusive presence of God, He can then freely give himself to a person, transforming him inwardly and giving him His rest. And when man allows himself to be endowed with God and gives himself completely to Him in gratitude for everything, God can qualify him for his collaborator in serving all humanity and creation and in giving rest to others. In this way, he becomes a gift to others together with Him.

Silence and stillness also enable man to be mindful, or more deeply aware of all that he is gifted with at the moment, and also of God, who is sought after in everything, and who gives himself to him with His tender love and enables him to rest in it (Svetelj 2021, 123–130).

3.5 Prayer

Prayer is a way of resting as well as a way of waiting. In Mt 6:5–15 Jesus gives instruction for prayer. He encourages His disciples to go to their room, close the door and pray »to your Father who is in that secret place« (v. 6). He then warns them that they must not pray like pagans who are trying to manipulate God (v. 7). They are to turn to Him as to their Father who knows what they need before they ask (v. 8). They should be persistent in prayer (Lk 18:7), without trying to persuade Him. Above all, let them praise and worship Him, and only then express their concerns and needs (Mt 6:11–13). Their prayer is essentially to be with Christ in the Father and to allow Him to reveal himself as Father to His sons and daughters, through the grace of the Holy Spirit who cries out in them »Abba, Father«



(Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), and to give them a taste of rest in His Son. For that reason Jesus encourages them to ask the Father above all for the kingdom of God (Mt 6:36) and the Holy Spirit (Lk 13:11), for with this all else will be given to them. The Holy Spirit, who is first and foremost the Comforter, is able to give man comfort and rest like nothing else can (Jn 14-16). A special form of prayer that leads to spiritual rest is asking for forgiveness, both from God and from men. The profound experience of forgiveness from God and others, or to ourselves, is essentially a spiritual rebirth that makes us not only more Godlike but also more human (Svetelj 2017, 526–534).

In the Eastern Church, the Jesus Prayer, or the prayer of the heart, is very well known as the prayer of repose: »Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.« St. Ignatius of Loyola also proposes a rhythmic prayer, which takes into account the rhythm of human breathing and makes it possible to become more deeply aware of the content of the words of the daily prayers (e.g., the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, etc.) that we pray, or of the person to whom we pray (Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Mother of God, Mary ...), or of oneself in that prayer (Exx 258–260). Focused prayer can also be helpful, in which the praying person chooses a word or a short phrase from the Bible to which he returns whenever he is distracted by something. He repeats each word slowly, gently, flowing from one to the next. With practice, the repetitive rhythm of the words gradually gives way to long periods of uninterrupted prayer, thus dwelling in the presence of God (Laird 2011, 79).

3.6 Contemplation of beauty, goodness and reality

Jesus encourages His disciples not to be anxious, as the Father cares for them even more than for the lilies and the sparrows (Mt 7:25-32), and He gives His sun to shine and His rain to fall on everyone (Mt 5:45). In order to be convinced of this care for them, may they allow themselves to be taught by them and by all creation about the goodness, beauty, and reality of the Father (Pardon 2021, 285–287; Platovnjak 2019, 87–88; Roszak 2018, 155–166). In this way, he encourages them to contemplate and savour the Father's self-giving love in all that exists and all that can be perceived with their senses, even when they eat and drink (Platovnjak 2021, 87–91). In this reality of God's love, they can find the rest that the Father gives to all who trust in Him and become merciful like Him. Those who seek this



rest in the goodness, the truth and the beauty will find it, enabling them to endure even the darkness (Rohr 2013). The daily examen recommended by St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* (43) can be of great help as well. Through it, man is invited to be aware of how God seeks and visits him in all that he has experienced during the day and to give thanks to him, as instructed by Apostle Paul: »for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.« (1 Thess 5:18) In living according to these instructions we are led to a continual joy that no one can take away (1 Thess 5:16-23; Phil 4:4).

For many, rest is also found in the contemplation of beauty in the various works of art, poetry, music, literature, theatre, ballet, opera, architecture, etc. (Valters Paintner 2005, 42–47). This is a way of nourishing and resting the soul and spirit, which in turn has a positive effect on the body. For some people, it is also a restful experience to meet those they love and to have various friendships. The psalmist notes: »How good, how delightful it is for all to live together like brothers.« (Ps 133:1) For some, it is very precious to sing alone or with others, or to joke and to laugh. In all this, they also taste the gift of the beauty, goodness and reality of God who gives himself to them and gives them His rest through it all.

3.7 Sunday and the Eucharistic sacrifice of thanksgiving

The Priestly account of creation does not end its description of the creation of the world with the creation of man but with the Sabbath, the seventh day. Thus, the whole creation was crowned with the Sabbath, so that man might glorify God in it by the rest he should give to himself, to his neighbours and to the animals (Exod 23:12; Deut 5:12-14). Shabbat can literally mean »to cease, to end, to rest«. »On the Sabbath all are equal, all have the right to rest. This is written into the very fabric of man, for he is created in the image of God, and God rested on the seventh day.« (Globokar 2018, 360) The Sabbath follows the six days that are focused on tasks and creation, so that with twenty-four hours one can rest and be spiritually enriched. The Ten Commandments call not only for remembrance (Exod 20:8) but also for Sabbath observance (Deut 5:12). This day calls man to stop working, acquiring things, making things, expecting a return, and thinking that his worth depends only on his work. Instead, he is called to simply dwell and receive the gifts of the Creator. It is a time



of enjoying God's gifts, of relaxing body, soul and spirit in the presence of God (Amstutz 2018, 7; Heschel 2015, 40–90).

Christians initially observed the rest of the Old Testament Sabbath and the next day solemnly celebrated Jesus' Easter victory over evil, sin, and death. Gradually, the Sabbath rest and the Easter celebration merged into the celebration of Sunday. For all Christians, Sunday became a day of thanksgiving for all God's work for them and for all creation. This is especially expressed in the communal celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice of thanksgiving. Through it, we all become ever more one in Christ's Spirit of love, mercy and forgiveness (Krajnc 2018, 805–810). Through Eucharistic celebration and festal rest, Christians turn their gaze each Sunday to Christ and the Kingdom of God that came into the world with him, and to his Second Coming. In this way, they open themselves to the rest that Christ brought and brings again and again, especially on this day.

Of course, it is important that the Sabbath or Sunday does not become something that makes us dry. It is always necessary to bear in mind what Jesus pointed out when He was reproached for breaking the Sabbath: »The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.« (Mk 2:27)

Conclusion

Can a Christian fully live out his spirituality if there is no place for rest or a spirituality of rest? This paper has shown that rest and its spirituality play an irreplaceable role in Christian spirituality. In fact, they are its hallmark.

The research has upgraded the few scholarly articles that have so far dealt directly with rest in Christianity by presenting a comprehensive view of its essence, which is a pure, gratuitous gift from God to the Christian as he pauses to renew in various ways his relationship with the Triune God and, in Him, with himself, with others, and with all of creation.

The seven basic types or forms of rest recommended in the Bible and by various spiritual teachers of the Church are briefly presented: Sleep, Movement, Solitude, Silence, Prayer, Contemplation of the Beautiful, the Good, and Reality, and Sunday and the Eucharistic Sacrifice



of Thanksgiving. All these forms would require a closer look at how, through them, the Christian can attain the true rest that Jesus Christ promises to all who come to him (Mt 11:28-30), and how he can fully live out spirituality of rest.

In the God of Jesus Christ, then, lies the source of true rest and the possibility for the life of every Christian to become ever more balanced. In Christ, he has the freedom (Jn 8; Rom 8; Gal 5) to use what helps him to live his life fully as a friend, interlocutor and co-worker with God (Exx 23).

Those who carry within themselves the image of God revealed by Jesus Christ and live an integrated Christian spirituality (Francis 2013, 1-8.259-283; Platovnjak 2020a, 228-231), which includes a spirituality of rest, experience what the psalmist already wrote: »Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet like a child in its mother's arms, as content as a child that has been weaned.« (Ps 131:2) Such an integrated spirituality enables him to be resilient even in the most difficult situations of life (Simonič 2019, 543-544; Žalec 2020b, 272-276; 2021, 141-143).



Abbreviation

Exx Ignacij Lojolski 2007 [*Spiritual Exercises*]

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