

Pastoral Reflection
16th Sunday Ordinary Time
July 18, 2021

Jesus listened. When the disciples returned from healing, forgiving, and sharing the Good News of God's compassionate Love, the first thing Jesus did was listen to them. As he listened to their stories he heard their hearts as well and realized they needed to rest. Jesus then listened with compassion to the crowd, saw they were like sheep without a shepherd, and responded with love.

Jesus shows us the way. Attentive listening is a spiritual practice that enables understanding. Mindful listening heals. We saw the power of deep listening that occurred in South Africa when those who suffered because of apartheid could speak their truth and be heard. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland proposed a similar Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Commission by which indigenous peoples can share their residential school trauma and be heard. As a country, we need to listen deeply to the racism experienced by our Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian communities. We can learn from communities around the world. For example, Thich Nhat Hahn's Buddhist community often facilitates deep listening between Palestinians and Israelis.

Our church would benefit from deeply listening to those abused, to the LBGQT+ community, and to women.

Attentive listening is important in our families as well. There are many societal factors that work against this as we pay more attention to our phones than to our loved ones.

To counter this addiction to distraction we must take time to rest so we can listen to our own spirits. Jesus reminded his disciples and us. Listen and rest.

By growing our ability to listen well, we can act compassionately as Jesus did.

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