

Andre Kostelanetz, a well known musician of his time, paid a visit to his friend, the great painter Henri Matisse. When Andre arrived he was weary, stressed out and exhausted. Henri noticed his friend's condition and said, "Andre, you must find the artichokes in your life." "What?" the harried musician responded. "Let me show you." Taking him by the hand, the two gentlemen walked out into the garden where there was a patch of artichokes.

Matisse went on to explain that every morning, after he had worked for awhile, Matisse would come out to the artichoke patch. There he would pause and contemplate the stillness. "You know Andre, I have painted over 200 canvases, and yet when I come out here I discover new combinations of color and fantastic patterns. No one is allowed to disturb me in this ritual. This stillness and quiet give me fresh inspiration, necessary relaxation, and a new perspective on my work."

The idea of stepping out of the routine of life for awhile is not a new concept. Even Jesus in our gospel today took time away from the crowds. He was healing people all evening and then early

in the morning he left to go to a deserted place where he could pray. Jesus took time to find the artichokes in order to collect his thoughts and clear his mind. Healing the sick was an activity that drained Jesus. He needed to reenergize himself and he did it through solitude and prayer. The same is true for all of us.

Working with others, relating to our family members and our friends, and dealing with the pressures of this rollercoaster we call life can be tiring and aggravating. That is why it is so important for us to find the artichokes. Now if we are not privy to a garden like Matisse, then maybe we can go in another direction and take a walk or even create in our lives a deserted place where we can go. At home one could create a quiet space where they can retreat to take a breather. At work maybe there is a bench outside or a quiet hallway where one can pause and clear their head, at school maybe there is a corner table in the library or a desk in the back of an empty classroom that will allow for some quiet solitude. For me it is a swing on my back deck. When I am stressed I go there and swing contemplating the beauty of the trees

in my backyard.

We know that our world is a hectic and demanding place and that it can take a lot out of us. So we need to slow down at times, get out of the fast lane and look for those places where we can find some quiet in an effort to experience the stillness of the Father's presence. Amid all the turmoil of his day, Jesus was able to do it and it is a lesson that our great Teacher wants to pass onto us.