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“We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do” (Luke 17:10).

We were invited to a potluck supper at some friends’ house. During the meal I noticed that one of the hosts was missing while we ate and enjoyed a lively conversation. When she eventually appeared, I realized she had been with the couple’s children, one of whom is a special needs child. I recalled the times growing up how my mother’s routine was based on whatever immediate needs had popped up for this or that child or in the constant rush of tasks that came with caring for a family of nine.

I also recalled a visit with a priest friend in a large parish and how he was continually being interrupted by the doorbell, the phone or someone stopping by to ask a question or remind him of a meeting. He laughed and said how he had come to accept that this was his actual schedule, being interrupted by the needs of others. Except for his day off, he was at the mercy of whatever required his attention.

Many of Luke’s stories about Jesus’ instructions to his disciples were clearly directed at the leaders of faith communities a generation later. Being entrusted with the needs of the church entailed authority and even some status, so Luke was continually reminding leaders that they were servants. This was the role Jesus had prepared them for by his words and his example.

Today’s Gospel lesson had an edge to it then and is always a timely reminder in today’s church. Jesus chides his Apostles for expecting to be waited on after their

duties were completed. As servants of the community they were always on call. Even after a day behind the plow or with the flock, they were still expected to prepare the Lord's table and offer the eucharistic meal with the community. Like the mother and father of a family, caring for their children is not extra duty. It is who they are. Or like the busy pastor, a day of interruptions is what he signed on for when he was ordained.

A reasonable schedule and a predictable set of expectations are desirable. Yet, surrendering ourselves to God opens us to graces we might not plan for or always welcome, but which draw us into adventures filled with joy and satisfaction. A short morning prayer can prepare us for a different kind of day: "Here I am, Lord, I have come to do your will."

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