

## **SR. PATRICIA MCCARTHY, CND - A SUMMER HOLIDAY REFLECTION FROM THE UNITED STATES**

Even though there is a constant barrage of reports about a return to in person school, with or without masks, it is still summer. The pity of rushing through August with thoughts of September would be a waste of thirty one days of summer. On the east coast August is often the best of the summer. The ocean water is a bit less cold, the sun is hot and days are long enough to take advantage of early sunrise strolls on the beach and late walks toward sunsets.

The sea always needs watching. There is never boredom in gazing on the waves as they come and go, sometimes crashing, sometimes gently lapping on the shore. A fierce storm with winds that almost knock one down is as mesmerizing as a calm sunny day with surfers and boaters. In the first paragraph of Moby Dick, Herman Melville's great tale of obsessions and whales, especially of the white variety, the storyteller Ismael says, "Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can."

From the smallest child to the eldest person, everyone needs soul food; and sea watching is one of the real health foods of the spirit. Whatever our mission in life is: parent, teacher, spouse, student, community organizer, anti-war activist, social worker, doctor, nurse, fast food restaurant employee, auto mechanic – we all need calm before the daily storms of life. For most of us life is a long-term commitment; and patience and peace are necessary requirements for a life of meaning and hope.

When Jesus was teaching his disciples and breaking them into a life of service for love of God, he showed them by example how to take breaks from the routines of the day, to go apart for a bit and let things settle in the soul and pray. Jesus also took them apart to rest and reflect on the wonders of living with him and following God's will.

Time apart does not mean turning our backs on the many needs of life. On the contrary, it means preparing ourselves to maintain a constant attention to them. Looking at waves crashing on the shore can fill us with a sense of God's continual cleansing of us; the constancy of the rhythm reminds us of the Father's in-breaking into our lives, through storm and quiet.

There are many of our brothers and sisters who have been tossed into the water, too far from a safe shore to make it back on their own - countless victims of violence, of human trafficking, of racism and poverty, of abuse and neglect. 82.4 million refugees (according to the United Nations as of the end of 2020) cannot return to their native shores at this time, if ever. 385 million children (UNICEF) currently live in extreme poverty.

They lack the physical strength to make their way to shore.

Letting the waves of God's love lap over our feet for moments of rest give those same feet the strength to take the steps necessary to consciously reach for those floundering in the sea of hopelessness and despair. It is God who inspires our hearts to want to rescue them, and it is God who leads us over and over to never cease from our efforts for peace and justice for all, and it is God who leads us to a place apart to refresh and renew us, to allow us to savour the love in each wave.