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TO LIVE IS TO REST, TO REST IS TO LIVE

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7/29/2022

Today, most human beings are tired, fatigued, and exhausted. We're worn down as we live subjected to the hard and tiring rhythm of work and competition ... or when we're engrossed and accelerated by aimless and senseless activism. But, in addition, today, we live enslaved by the omnipresent connection wrought by the media and social networks, even as we are tired and exhausted by our own personal and family failures in addition to the many social frustrations that come to us and affect us from terrible government administrations and the great evils that we share with all humanity: pandemics, wars, famines, violence, injustices, widespread corruption, scandals, etc.

For all these reasons, summer becomes an opportunity to rest, to free ourselves from our burdens, schedules, and worries of daily life, to recover strength, to reunite with our loved ones and our desires, and, in short, to humanize ourselves again.

But, what does it mean to rest? Is it enough to lie on some beach or to trade the frenzy of your daily routine for the equally exhausting enjoyment of the rumbas and summer celebrations? At the end of the summer break, many feel like they have lost their vacations or that they are coming back to their usual chores even more exhausted. All this tells us that resting is also learning the art of knowing how to live and how to be happy men and women.

Every day and in every society, we all face agitation, fatigue, anguish, anxiety, stress, and so many forms of loneliness, frustration, sadness, depression, and mental imbalances. These require us to learn to rest. We must learn to invest, not in the superficiality, madness, delirium, exaltation, and alienation that celebrations, escapisms, and other substitutes of happiness can bring us. We all yearn for these and they leave us even more tired. We must return to ourselves, to depth versus superficiality, to silence so we can listen and listen to ourselves amidst the noise and scandal. We must return to interiority versus exteriority, appearance, façades, and ostentation.

To rest, we must rediscover the value of the small, close, and simple in everyday life. We must learn to give thanks: to learn gratitude as a capacity and virtue that fills us with joy. To rest means to rediscover the best of ourselves, others, nature, and everything that we are, have experienced, and that surrounds us.

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To rest is to remember that success in society is not always synonymous with the happiness we long for; happiness is every human's most important and unpostponable task. To rest is to remember that an intense life is not the same as a crazy life lacking direction, that freedom is not the same as debauchery, and that being always connected does not necessarily mean being more in communication and less alone. We rest if we remember that always being occupied with emergencies does not mean always being busy with what is truly important in life, and that always having agendas saturated with an enormous amount of tasks, appointments, commitments, and chores does not mean living with greater and better quality.

We all must learn to rest not only in the summer, but every day and always. We have to learn to make rest a lifestyle that is achieved when we level up, untangle ourselves from everyday bonds, and move from the whirlwind of immediate materiality to asking ourselves what is important and fundamental in human existence, that is, when we achieve a sense of transcendence.

May summer and the vacation season provide us all with a greater and definitive rest, an invaluable calm, that elusive inner peace that we long for, a peace with ourselves, others, and nature. Hopefully, we will rest and acquire a human—and not a mechanistic—rhythm that in daily life allows us to live in permanent rest and taste the good, noble, and beautiful experience of living and being human. Hopefully, we will learn to discern and differentiate what is accessory from what is fundamental in each moment and circumstance of our lives.

Mario J. Paredes is the EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT of SOMOS Community Care, a network of 2,500 independent physicians — mostly primary care physicians — who care for nearly one million of New York City's most vulnerable Medicaid patients.