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### Spiritual Essays

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## Resting

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## Resting

Vacations sometimes include resting, though we often keep so busy with travel and activities that we need a rest after the time of vacation has ended. Our daily needs for rest varies widely among us, as do our practices: some do all their resting at night, while others combine some sleep at night with small "time outs" during the day. Many of us have experimented with our limits by taking as little rest as possible, so as to have more time to accomplish the many items on our "to do" lists. If we have come to accept our own particular limits by having reflected on our experiences, we have learned that sickness or significant loss of efficiency are natural consequences for not taking enough rest.

Besides the physical consequences of fatigue, lack of rest affects our thinking and feelings, and also our spirituality. When we are tired, we are more than ordinarily vulnerable to negative thoughts, as well as more liable to become discouraged and to lose our sense of priorities. Resting is a significant antidote for patterns of thought that lead us into desolation.

Resting is much more about receiving, than giving. In a balanced life, and in every love relationship, we cannot be actively giving all the time. No friendship develops if one person takes all the initiatives and does all the talking, accepting nothing from the other person. In rest, our energy is replenished as we lessen demands on our bodies, minds, and spirits. Besides sleeping, we can receive most of the benefits of resting by choosing to be rather more receptive than active in relating with others and with our environment. How often we find that being in the company of someone we trust, though we converse little and do even less, is even better than a nap for restoring energy and our capacity to match thoughts and actions with our deepest desires.

Prayer too, can be restful. Just as we might have an intense heart-to-heart conversation with a friend at one time, and at another time sit quietly together with hardly any exchange of words, our relationship with God can include direct communication involving thoughts and feelings, as well as occasions when we are only briefly aware that we are in the same place at the same time. We can become appropriately receptive to God as we "let go" into a mode of resting. God continually recreates us, whether we are interacting, resting, or even sleeping.

In our relationship with God, we receive far more than we are capable of recognizing, even when we are fully conscious. While we rest or

sleep, especially when we do so in trust that God can and will take care of the world and our affairs while we are “doing nothing,” we usually experience not only physical refreshment that attends a cessation of activity, but increased enthusiasm, creative inspirations, and clarity of thought and feelings that enables us to make decisions that match our values.

When parents know that their children are asleep, they can give their full attention to other matters of importance. While we rest or sleep, God does not metaphorically leave us and go about other business, but continues to move in our minds and hearts, so that we will be able to solve problems and gain realistic expectations of what we can and cannot accomplish when we are again fully conscious.

One of the more pleasant ways of encountering God is when we are resting.