

Seek First

May can be an exhausting month of the year. The winter's weather breaks (usually), and suddenly people are trying to do all sorts of things before June comes and summer is here. Fields and gardens need planting, yards need clearing, and lawns need mowing. The calendar in May is a busy one, what with Mother's Day, the opening of fishing season, graduations, and Memorial Day. The Church's calendar can also be busy, as confirmation, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday are often celebrated.

All this busyness, running hither, thither, and yon, can wear a body out. Wisdom would dictate that we seek a place of rest, an anchor point of calm in the midst of all this activity.

Unfortunately, people don't always listen to what wisdom would dictate.

Some plunge through their overcrowded schedules, thinking they'll just be busy now and rest later (even though 'later' never comes). Others try to create an illusion of rest by manipulating their schedules, juggling things around and fitting things in until they've satisfied all their priorities.

But that's the real problem right there. People speak of "priorities," but the word "priority" means "something given or meriting attention before competing alternatives." In other words, you can really only have one priority, one thing that comes before others. As Jesus put it, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24). Only one thing can stand at the head of the line.

Trouble is, most people can't figure out what that one thing should be. So they get themselves lost and confused amid all their "priorities," their endless lists of choices. Constantly switching what they put at the head of the line, it's not long before they don't even know where the head of the line is anymore, or which way they're going through life.

One way to resolve this confusion is to go back to the basics. Return to where the most important thing in your life, your faith in Jesus Christ, began. Why go there? Because all the stuff of this world, however important it may seem at the moment, is all going to pass away. Faith in Jesus is the only thing that takes you out of this life and into the life that is to come.

So where did your faith start? Martin Luther described it under the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed in his *Small Catechism*. He wrote, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

Your faith didn't start with you. It started with God. It started with His mercy and his gifts to you.

Then that means God should be at the head of the line, right? You and I don't put Him there; God puts Himself there. When we replace Him with other "priorities," that just messes up what He had already designed for us. When God comes first, when His Word and Sacraments are the anchor of calm in our busy lives, then He helps us fit things in, straighten things out, and get things done without destroying the very lives He gave us to live.

Perhaps that's part of what Jesus was thinking about when he said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Perhaps you and I should be 'adding' less and seeking God's kingdom and righteousness more.