

## **Traveling Companion: I hope you are not too busy!**

### **Fr. Michael Tracey**

Invariably, they say, "I hope you are not too busy." Sometimes, they preface their request with, "I hope I didn't catch you at a bad time," or "Is this a good time to talk?" or "Do you have a minute?" or "I hope I am not stopping you from anything," or "If this is not a good time, that's okay. Just let me know when it would be a good time," or, sheepishly, they may say, "I know you are busy and I hope I am not interrupting but..."

I often wonder what is behind such statements from persons who request to see me. I wonder do they expect rejection and so prepare themselves for the ultimate door-closing or are they saying that whatever I am doing at the time of their interruption is probably more important than what they might be struggling with. Do they want to lessen my guilt if I tell them that this is not a good time to talk?

Of course, while such comments may be genuine, they do not necessarily ease the guilt pangs that might accompany them. They lead to several self-reflective questions; questions like: Why am I always so busy? Why do I feel compelled to be busy all the time? Are the things I am doing while I am supposedly busy really that important? Is my busyness a buffer and an escape from tackling and dealing with things that I should really take care of? Does my busyness reflect my inability or unwillingness to say "no" to certain situations? Does my busyness justify my existence?

As I thought more deeply about such questions, I began to realize that there is something inside us that suggests that our true worth as human being is measured by how effective we are at pleasing people. I realized too, that we will feel guilty at the end of the day if we have nothing to show for it. I also got the deep down feeling that somehow we don't see life as a gift but that we are renting our individual piece of the earth. That led me to discover that maybe we don't see our intrinsic worth or value.

We all have a tendency to say "yes" to everyone and everything, even though we may harbor legitimate thoughts of a definitive "no" instead. Often, behind such a plethora of "yesses" lurks a handful of resentful "no" wishes.

Where does all this self-reflection lead? What is its basic conclusions? Basically, our "yesses," bathed in fears of rejection, leads us to the conviction that we don't see or are willing to accept our intrinsic worth and goodness; that, instead, we dwell in the mire of our own worthlessness.

We are willing to accept that God created us; that when he created human beings, he saw them as "very good." Instead, in spite of the numerous times we have been reminded of God's unconditional love for us, we still believe that our true worth is measured by what we do, rather than who we are.

The battle continues within us between "doing" and "being." Often, when we are forced to curtail our "doing" because of illness, job termination or getting older, then, we have no choice but to dwell on the implications of "being."

When I am forced to move from "doing" to "being," then I am not bound by time, by hours or minutes or days but have nothing to prove. Then I can accept myself and ultimately live by the reality of my gift from God without strings attached.

Now, I know that you were not too busy to read this article and that maybe you will let it be.