

I remember the days when you could call someone on the telephone, and if they were already on the line, you would get a busy signal. The person was already talking with someone, and you'd have to try again later. But nowadays, there's something called "call-waiting." Even though the person you are calling is already with someone, he or she gets a message that someone else is calling, and if you were the original conversation partner, you might just get put on hold a minute while the person finds out who is on the other line. "Can you hold on a minute? I have another call I need to get. Just a minute." And before you can say anything, you are put on hold.

Something like this is going on in this evening's Gospel lesson, and I don't think Jesus is happy about it one bit. One after another would-be disciples call on Jesus and tell him how eager they are to follow him, tell him how devoted they will be to him, tell him how they'll love him to the end, ... and in the middle of these assurances, their call-waiting clicks in. And these would-be disciples explain that they'll be right back with Jesus, they really will, they're 100% with him, to the end, but they've got to put him on hold for just a second to tend to this other bit of business, and they'll be right back,... honest.

And Jesus makes it clear that this is not going to work.

We have to remember that Jesus is not after a kind of cultic, Moonie mind-control. The Gospel is about a love relationship, and what Jesus knew about love relationships was that constant interruptions can kill them. And this love relationship is about all our mind and all our heart and all our soul. Jesus is after a monogamous relationship with you, and anything less than whole-hearted devotion can be deadly.

We all know about this. When lovers want to be especially intimate with each other, they go into their room secretly, privately, alone, and they shut the door. And what did Jesus say about prayer time with God? He said it was just like that. Go into your room alone, secretly, privately, and shut the door, and your Father who sees you in secret will reward you. We might ask ourselves how fully we are able to be with God and with each other.

Being a Christian is not about being good; it's not about following the rules or making yourself pleasing to God. Because you already are pleasing to God. Being a Christian is about rediscovering a life-giving intimacy. It's about making yourself available for an uninterrupted love relationship with God that leads to deeper, focused love for others.

Many of us know about the kind of spiritual and emotional fragmentation that makes intimacy difficult and sometimes impossible for us. Are the various demands on our lives causing us to lose our ability to focus? Are we losing our ability to maintain wholehearted spiritual attentiveness, because we have a call-waiting feature installed on our souls?

This evening's Gospel story invites us to ask ourselves if we are regularly being interrupted in our relationship with God. What is keeping us from the deeper intimacy with God to which Jesus calls us? We can't respond to everything, and we already have someone on the line to our soul, someone waiting patiently for a love relationship that will change everything, if only we can be still and listen.