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Pope Francis delivers his blessing to visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square after praying the Angelus at the Vatican July 21, 2024. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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In order to be compassionate and respond best to the needs of others, it is necessary to take time out to relax and not be anxious about getting things done, Pope Francis said.

It is also a "social injustice" when working parents hardly see their children because of long hours away from home, he said, before praying the Angelus in St. Peter's Square July 21. "In families, fathers and mothers should have time to share with their children, to let love grow within their family and in order not to fall into the dictatorship of doing."

The pope reflected on the day's Gospel reading from St. Mark (6:30-34) about Jesus telling the apostles to rest after their return from their mission of preaching and healing. However, when Jesus saw the vast crowd that had gathered, "his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things," the verse says.

The pope said, "On the one hand, there is an invitation to rest, and on the other, Jesus' compassion for the crowd." Resting and being compassionate "may seem like two incompatible things, while they actually go together."

"Only if we learn how to rest can we have compassion. Indeed, it is only possible to have a compassionate gaze, which knows how to respond to the needs of others, if our heart is not consumed by the anxiety of doing, if we know how to stop and how to receive the grace of God, in the silence of adoration," he said.

There is a danger that "can threaten us when, for instance, our enthusiasm in carrying out our mission or our work, as well as the roles and tasks entrusted to us, make us fall victim to a kind of activism which is overly concerned with things to do and with results, and this is a bad thing," he said.

"It then happens that we become agitated and lose sight of what is essential. We risk exhausting our energies and falling into bodily and spiritual fatigue," the pope

said.

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A person's life, society in general and even the church in its pastoral work may often be "held prisoner by haste," he said. "Brothers and sisters, let us beware of the dictatorship of doing!"

This can also happen out of necessity in families, he added, when one or both parents have to earn a living and sacrifice time that could have been spent with the family, for example, having to leave before the kids are awake and getting home after they are asleep.

"This is a social injustice," he said. "Let us think about what we can do to help people who are forced to live in this way."

Francis encouraged Catholics to ask themselves: "Am I able to stop during my day? Am I capable of taking a moment to be with myself and with the Lord, or am I always in a hurry, in a constant hurry for things to do?"

He asked the faithful to find an "inner" place of rest even in the midst of a busy day and to be compassionate towards others.