

A Summer Invitation

There is something magical about June. Having lived most of my life following the rhythms of the academic year, June marks the beginning of summer – that time of sacred rest from the busyness of the school year. Folks whose work schedules don't include "summer vacation" still delight in the extra hours of light at the end of a long day. It's as though those extra hours remind us that there will be time to do what we really must do. And what might that be?



In her poem, "The Summer Day," Mary Oliver describes spending a day wandering among nature, "wasting" time as our society would likely say. Responding to this admonition, she asks "Tell me, what else should I have done? Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Summer is an invitation to be. As we watch fruit ripening on the vine or take comfort in the shade of an old tree, we are reminded that we are part of something infinitely larger than ourselves. All the busyness recorded in our calendars – what has it really accomplished? Sometimes, I think our society mistakes busyness for productivity. Every day, a new technology emerges that teaches us how to better multitask. We accept every invitation because of what my undergrads call "FOMO:" "fear of missing out." While multitasking is certainly a useful skill (as a professor, wife and mother I can certainly attest to this fact!) and while it is good to be invited, they become problematic when we are so busy doing it all that we no longer take time to **be** with it all.

For me, being looks like sitting with an old friend and listening to her story. It looks like taking my daughter to the park and actually playing with her. It means sitting with God in silent prayer. When I am present to these moments, I notice that I am not busy but I am productive. I realize that I have all the time I need to do what I really must do precisely because I am being who I am called to be.

What does being busy look like for you? Perhaps this summer you can sit with this question. It will likely show you what you are doing "with your one wild and precious life."

Pearl Maria Barros, IHM Associate