

The seventh graders got to hear a bit about my travels in China and Japan. And I thought I'd start out with a story about Japan.

An old master received a university professor who came to inquire about studying under him. As part of Japanese custom, the master served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring. The professor watched the overflowing until he couldn't stand it any longer. "It's too full. No more will go in!" The master said, "Like this cup, you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you anything unless you first empty your cup?"

In the first reading, we hear about Ezra. He came back with about 5,000 Israelites from exile in Babylon, and they were all set up to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and especially the Temple.

What we hear today is just after Ezra got a report back that things weren't working out the way he expected. And in a nutshell, Ezra is freaking out on God.

Ezra is so full of his own plans and ideas of how everything needs to be perfect, that he loses it. Sometimes we get all worked up, too when things don't go our way.

In the Gospel, Jesus sends out his apostles to preach and heal and tells them to take NOTHING with them. The one thing he gives them to take along is POWER and AUTHORITY.

So, what does this have to do with us?

Our days are pretty busy. School goes from 7:30-ish in the morning until almost 3 in the afternoon. Then there's sports or other activities. Next may be dinner, and then homework, and then maybe some TV and off to bed ... only to wake up for school the next morning.

And our minds are kept pretty busy ... first of all trying to figure out how we're going to keep on schedule. We've got lectures, and lessons, and homework. And if that's not enough, we've got noise – background music in stores, iPods or MP3 players.

Are we too full for God? Are our schedules too full to make a little time for God? Are our minds too full to give a thought to God.

When we're already full, nothing more can come in. Like the tea cup in the story about the professor. "It's too full. No more will go in!"

I'd like to propose that somehow, somewhere in our busy schedules – maybe first thing in the morning, or maybe last thing at night. Maybe 30 seconds between class. Or any time you can find time ... and make a little space for God in the midst of all this busy-ness.

And in that little space of time you make for God, recognize your own identity as a Baptized Christian – a son or daughter of God the Father, redeemed in Jesus Christ, and heir to the POWER and the AUTHORITY of the Holy Spirit.