

23 Sunday, Sept. 3-4, 2016

Father Patrick's Reflection

My dear people of God, this Sunday Jesus confront us with the cost of discipleship. To help us think about this Jesus employs some provocative language. **One of the essential skills Jesus gives is learning to live simply.** 'None of you can be my disciple unless you give up all those possessions you say you can't live without.' **Another essential skill is putting Jesus first.** That's what he's getting at by saying, 'you can't be my disciple without hating your mum and dad and your brother and your sister (Luke 14:26). It is certainly language to wake us up isn't it and to ask, what is it going to mean to be a genuine follower of Jesus. It **entails total dedication and commitment.** It also means **detachment from all worldly attraction.** We cannot allow other commitments to take priority.

If we desire to spend eternity with God in heaven, then we must be disciples of Christ. This requires of us to forsake all things. **Christ must be the ultimate choice of our life.** Choosing Christ might cause us friends, families and our comfort. We need to have a plan for getting to heaven. Showing up on Sunday's is not enough. We must constantly strive to grow closer to Christ. In short, we need to have plan for spiritual growth.

By putting him first we realize that he is the one about whom the writer of the Book of Wisdom (the first reading) speaks, it is Jesus who is the Wisdom who teaches us and saves us. In the opening prayer of today's Mass we asked God that '**those who believe in Jesus may receive true freedom and an everlasting inheritance.**' My friends, Jesus gives us this in a special way in his sacraments.

The first illustration is that of the man who intends to build a tower. The second illustration is that of the king marching out to war. Notice that the king has only 10,000 troops whereas the enemy has 20,000.

Identifying ourselves with the king in the parable, we can see that the enemy outnumbers us two to one. **“For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”** (Ephesians 6:12). We are bound to fail unless we appeal to a stronger king to come to our assistance. And that powerful king, the King of kings, is none other than God Himself.

Paul’s Letter to Philemon reminds us that as Christians we need to have higher standards of moral behavior among us than what obtains in the society at large. If it is true that among us **“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”** (Galatians 3:28), then we need to have more egalitarian structures in Christian communities and churches than what obtains in the wider society. Our oneness in Christ should come before our differences of age, race, gender, and social status in such a way that non-Christians seeing the way we live can say, “See how much they love one another.

Finally, dear friends, Jesus is challenging us to ask ourselves how willing are we to pay the cost if we are serious in following him. Are we serious enough to prefer him over our family and loved ones? Are we willing to carry our cross and follow him? Are we willing to detach ourselves from the enslaving power of material attractions so as to focus more on God and our salvation? May God give us his grace to put Him first in our life; give Him total dedication; commitment and detach from all worldly attractions and follow Him with sincerity of heart. Amen!