

Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary time Cycle C

Wis. 9.13-18, Phil. 9-10, 12-17, Luke 14.25-33

In today's 1st reading from the Book of Wisdom God reveals to us that wisdom is not acquired by human effort alone. Wisdom requires a humble docility to perceive and act on God's will. God has revealed through the Sacred Scriptures a road map of information for us to reach heaven. It is understood that our intelligence and understanding of worldly things has limits. Yet God has a plan, a plan for each and everyone of us. To guide us God has sent the Holy Spirit.

Today's Gospel can be confusing. Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Is Jesus really telling us we must hate? Absolutely not! Fr. Pablo Gadenz explains that "hating ones relatives is a Jewish idiom that uses hyperbole to indicate one's preference." An idiom is an expression in a language that has a meaning that cannot be derived from the literal meanings of its individual words. For example, the phrase a "blessing in disguise" refers to something that seems bad at first but turns out to be good. A hyperbole is a figure of speech and literary device that creates a heightened effect through deliberate exaggeration.

So, when Jesus uses the word "hate," He uses it to heighten the direction and guidance he is trying to lead us to. Jesus who is wisdom incarnate, is telling us that we should love Him more than we love our own family, and even more than we love ourselves. The CCC 1618 also helps explain today's Gospel. It states that, "Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with Him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social."

Think back to the Ten Commandments. They came in two tablets or pieces if you will. I ask you how many were written on each tablet? Well, three commandments were written on one side while seven were written on the other. Again, God's wisdom, the first three commandments are about our relationship and our love of and for God. The next Seven are about our relationship and love of neighbor.

Jesus is NOT directing us to violate the commandments. Think about immediately after the 3 Commandments for love of God is to Honor your mother and Father. Again, Jesus is saying God must come first. In our world I think all too

often we are encouraged and prompted to think of ourselves and materialism first. Listen to how Jesus emphasizes this need to imitate Him, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

Jesus tells us this journey is not going to be easy. As disciples we, through our free will choose to follow Him. My friends this is an action and decision that each and everyone of us must make and do by our actions. Jesus carried the cross for our sins. Now it is up to us to carry our burdens, our troubles, our cross. Yet, we know that Jesus is right there beside us. I can't help but to think of the poem "Two footprints in the Sand," written by Mary Stevenson in 1936 when she was only 14 years old. I want to call your attention to the last two paragraphs; "

"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."

Yes we are called to carry our cross but never alone! We are all called to surrender totally to God. To surrender our mind, heart and soul to Him. We have wonderful saints to turn to for examples and guidance. Most importantly we have our Holy Family, look at the examples of Mother Mary and St. Joseph the first adorers of Jesus Christ. They teach us the need for humility.

Remember Jesus said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt. 28.20). Jesus accomplishes this through the most Holy Eucharist. The real presence of Jesus which we receive at Mass. The real presence of Jesus in the tabernacles throughout the world which allows us to visit and see the presence of Jesus. Let us put Jesus first place in our minds, hearts and our souls.