

Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

We are complex human beings, and we make thousands of decisions every day to choose what we are to do minute by minute. Most of those decisions are so routine that we do not know that we are making them. But there are some decisions that we must make that can be quite difficult and may come at a great cost.

Today Jesus reminds us that the decision to follow him and live as his disciples demands a lot of us. He talks about that decision in terms of what we might need to leave behind and in terms of the weight of the cross we might be asked to carry. Luke tells us that great crowds accompanied Jesus as he made his way towards Jerusalem. Some of them would have probably seen the journey as a march towards freedom from Roman rule. None of them would have anticipated what would happen to Jesus when he got to Jerusalem. Jesus turns to the crowd and warns them of the cost of following him. Just as Jesus had to make hard choices to continuing along the road to Jerusalem so must the people following him have to make hard choices if they want to become and remain disciples of Jesus.

“If anyone comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife children and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple.” That word “hate” can be misleading. In the Aramaic idiom used by Jesus, hate has nothing to do

with the way that we feel towards another person. Perhaps it is best understood as meaning to turn away from or to detach oneself from something. Jesus wants us to be clear that when we become his disciples then our commitment to him must take preference over any other commitments we make, even those to our own family. We must be detached enough from even the members of our own families to have the freedom to choose first what God wants for us.

But there is some irony in this isn't there? When we set out to choose what God wants for us every day, we find ourselves not moving away from the people that we love but moving even closer to them. When we become detached enough and free enough to love Jesus, we find that we become detached enough and free enough to love those around us in a new way. Think of people like Mother Teresa. Her commitment to Jesus was absolute. And yet the closer she became to Jesus the closer she became to those who needed her love and care in the world in which she lived. Loving Jesus can never be an excuse for not loving members of our family or anyone else.

But loving is never easy. Jesus tells us in our gospel today that we cannot be his disciples unless we are ready to carry our crosses after him. The way that Luke puts it makes it clear that Jesus calls us to bear our crosses

daily. Our crosses may be quite different from the ones carried by the person beside us. But we are all called to walk humbly in the footsteps of the Lord and to keep renewing our commitment to be like him in the way that we love. It is good to look around and to notice those who are walking the road of discipleship with us. That is one of the great joys of being part of the Church. We rub shoulders with many living saints and learn from them how to live.

Jesus talks about sitting down and working out the cost of a tower before we start to build it. He talks about working out if we can win a battle before we face the enemy. A person of faith takes on their role in their family and in the wider community trusting that God will be with them, giving them the courage and the love that they will need to fulfil their commitment to their spouse and their children. They trust that God will be there for them as they stand up for what is just and fair in our society.

This weekend we are celebrating Father's Day. I would like to think that Father's Day is much more than giving Bunnings an excuse to encourage us spend money on the fathers in our families. It is an opportunity to thank God for the unique ways that God is able to show his love for us through our fathers. We are meant to be able to come to know what God is like through our fathers. But that

can only happen when fathers have made that choice to love as Jesus has taught us how to love.

On Thursday September 1st we began what Pope Francis has called a "Season of Creation". The season of creation is a time for us to celebrate all that God is creating for us in the world in which we live. It is a time to rediscover God's face in the beauty of creation. It is a time also to reflect upon the decisions that we are making to use well what we have been given. We have come to understand that our common home is becoming more fragile and must be cared for well. The extremes of weather that we hear about each day effect the lives of millions and ultimately will effect each one of us. We are called to learn how to make decisions about using fossil fuels and renewable energy that will give the earth a chance to breathe again.

The season of creation reminds us that caring for our earth is a faith decision. When we choose to follow Jesus, we choose to value and use well all that he has entrusted to us. May his Spirit of love move us to love the world in which we live.