

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

WHAT MORE MUST I GIVE UP?


SUNDAY READINGS:

WISDOM 9:13-18B

PSALM: 90: 3-6, 12-14, 17

PHILEMON 9-10, 12-17

LUKE 14:25-33



I found this Sunday's readings to be rich in challenging me in so many ways. I felt like I was on a retreat and hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit guiding me through each one. I have had situations where I sought answers through discernment with others and with prayer that kept my mind and heart open. I often heard a voice within me say: "May your will be done" but my mind would always add, "...

but...". Then right when I thought I knew the response to my discernment, another question would arise, "Who can know God's counsel, or who can conceive what the Lord intends?" Perhaps you never went through a discernment process, but surely you had difficult decisions to make along life's journey. Should I go to college and if so, where? What kind of profession fits me? I wonder if he/she is the right one for me? Am I ready for marriage? Are we ready to have children now? How do I talk to my teenage child? What is a good age to retire?

At one point I came to the conclusion that I did want to follow Jesus in a different way than my parents and sisters. However, encountering today's Gospel made me stop and second think my desire, because it just seemed too hard. Hate my family? Give up my possessions? (One thing that I did worry about giving up was wearing jeans! Don't laugh but I was only 18 years old in the early 70's.) As the adult life set in, instead of being easier, it seems that giving up possessions took on a whole different means. It wasn't so much physical possessions, but now

it was giving up the abstract and hidden ones like my opinion, my desires over others, my ways of doing things, my physical diminishment. These are the crosses that I bear now. Once again, you, too, may physical crosses and abstract ones, too. Think about them. Can you name them?

Jesus also says, “Whoever does not carry his/her own cross...cannot be my disciple.” Paradoxically all this giving up is related to the cross. They are part of the cross I carry and part of what brings me closer to Jesus and to my mission in the world. I think it was St. Francis who said that carrying the cross is not enough. We have to embrace our cross. As with Jesus, the cross will give us joy, peace, courage to help make our world a better place and will lead us to eternal life. We give you thanks, loving Father, for offering us the best cross suited for us. Give us strength to carry it with joy.

NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading – Wisdom 9:13-18b: This reading expresses so clearly what many of us think about when we are faced with serious challenges. When we are discerning life issues and really desire to follow God’s will, the opening question of this Wisdom passage comes to mind: “Who can know God’s counsel...?” The reading continues: “...and [we] are unsure of our plans.” Undoubtedly it is difficult to know God’s will, but we are the people who have received the Spirit of God and so we trust in the desire of the Spirit to reveal what is the divine will. We also trust in our belief that the Spirit will, indeed, show us the way.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS (CONT.):

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm: 90: 3-6, 12-14, 17: The psalmist continues with the recognition that the ways of God are beyond our control, “You turn man back to dust...[and make us] like the changing grass”. However, we can acquire wisdom if we follow the teachings of God. What joy it brings to our lives when we freely embrace the way of God. Our lives are filled with divine kindness as we live in the “gracious care of the Lord”

Second Reading – Philemon 9-10, 12-17: What a touching and heartwarming letter this is written by St. Paul. He knows that he will not be long here in this world and sends his son in Jesus to minister to Philemon and certainly to the community. We have all bid farewell to beloved family and community members but holding on to their legacy makes us stronger in our faith.

Gospel – Luke 14: 25-33: Being a missionary disciple according to Pope Francis’ definition, is not an easy choice. Although our baptism calls us to live this mission, many just cannot embrace the consequences. Jesus does not mean to hate our family in the dictionary definition of that word, but to renounce that relationship if it takes us away from being a true disciple. There is much we have to give up, but one thing surely we will always have to securely hold on to, and that is our own cross.

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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