

Wellspring

Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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June 26, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Our Scripture readings of this Sunday offer us a few challenges. I want to reflect on two of them that seem to stand out. The first is about the cost of discipleship and the second is about seizing the opportunities for discipleship which the Lord sends in his time and place.

In today's Gospel reading, we hear Jesus asking a man who wanted to follow him to stop and think what it would cost him. Jesus wanted him to know that he didn't have anything to offer, not even a place to rest. He was asking the man to count the cost of being a disciple. Jesus challenges us to make difficult choices, make the difficult journey, walk the path of trials, face testing times, enter through the narrow door, take up the cross and follow... choose the way of His Kingdom. The way to the kingdom is not easy, but it is just the right way, the way made to fit our needs! We must make difficult choices and be faithful to the choices we make. The choice is ours. Once the choice is made, the question is: is that your final choice? Your final answer to God's call?

Jesus spoke of a son who said "no" to his father and changed it into a "yes" and another son who said "yes" to his father changed it into a "no" (Mathew 21:28-32). The final answer made the difference. There are many whose lives once characterized by "no" to God and to God's goodness and then transformed it into a decided "yes", into a final answer "yes". Peter denied knowing Jesus but changed his denial into a commitment; Thomas doubted but changed his doubts into an affirmation of faith; Thomas Merton, one of the great mystics of our times moved from "No" to "Yes" - orphaned at 16, traveled Europe at 18 maintaining a bohemian lifestyle, a vowed communist at 20, a reporter for New York times at 24 and a Trapist monk at 26. Some of you may remember John Newton's dramatic conversion during a storm at sea. He was a slave trader. His "yes" to God is memorialized in "Amazing Grace."

We are all called to choose God's way. It is not difficult to recite a creed, or make a profession of faith, but to live the Christian life is demanding and challenging and often difficult. We must make difficult choices to live our faith. Fine words are never substitutes for fine deeds. Full of life and energy or tired and weary, let us choose God's way and be faithful. Let us strive to be true to ourselves, to be authentic in all we say and do, to be men and women of integrity, to be steadfast in living our faith and let all our choices reflect who we are as followers of Jesus.

The second challenge is about seizing the opportunities for discipleship as the Lord sends them in his time and place. The Gospel of today speaks of Jesus calling different people to follow him and each of them had a valid excuse for not accepting the call. He called them anyway and challenged them to accept the cost of being his disciples! The Gospel doesn't tell us whether or not they accepted the challenge.

One night a group of nomads were preparing to retire for the evening when suddenly they were surrounded by a great light. They knew they were in the presence of a celestial being. With great anticipation, they awaited a heavenly message of great importance that they knew must be especially for them. Finally, the voice spoke, "Gather as many pebbles as you can. Put them in your saddle bags. Travel a day's journey and tomorrow night will find you glad and it will find you sad."

After having departed, the nomads shared their disappointment and anger with each other. They had expected the revelation of a great universal truth that would enable them to create wealth, health and purpose for the world. But instead they were given a menial task that made no sense to them at all. However, the memory of the brilliance of their visitor caused each one to pick up a few pebbles and deposit them in their saddle bags while voicing their displeasure.

They traveled a day's journey and that night while making camp, they reached into their saddle bags and discovered every pebble they had gathered had become a diamond. They were glad they had diamonds. They were sad they had not gathered more pebbles. They failed to seize and make the best use of the opportunity for prosperity and security. There is always tragedy in not seizing the opportunities that the Lord provides.

The Gospel reading of today's mass (Luke 9:51-62) speaks of missed opportunities. The Samaritans had a wonderful opportunity to meet the Messiah, but they did not welcome him into their town. So they missed meeting Jesus who was well disposed to the Samaritans unlike the Jews of his day. Jesus presented a Samaritan as a model of compassion in the story of the Good Samaritan and brought new life to the Samaritan woman at the Jacob's well. However, this Samaritan village missed their opportunity to meet Jesus. We never know what would have happened to them if they had welcomed Jesus.

How many times a day, a week, a month, a year or a lifetime do we have opportunities to be kind, charitable, forgiving, serving, sacrificing - and may not even realize that they are the opportunities that the Lord sends to give witness to our life as disciples of Jesus? We may not be called to be great missionaries in a foreign land, but we can be witnesses of Jesus Christ where we are as we go about doing our daily chores. Take a few moments this week to be still and to reflect on how your day has been. Reflect on the opportunities that the Lord sent you for serving him by serving his people and how you have responded.

God bless you and your family

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 26, 2022

Christianity means giving witness to Christ every day.

Christianity is not a school of ideas or a collection of beautiful temples and lovely art; it is a living people who follow Jesus and give witness to him every day. A Christian who doesn't give witness is unfathomable. We are not a religion of ideas, of pure theology, of beautiful things and commandments. We are a people who follow Jesus Christ and give witness -- that is, want to give witness to Jesus Christ and this witness sometimes ends up being giving one's life.

(Pope Francis)

Collect

O God, who through the grace of adoption
chose us to be children of light,
grant, we pray,
that we may not be wrapped in the darkness of error
but always be seen to stand in the bright light of truth.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

I Kings 19:16, 19-21

This excerpt gives us an inspiring and amusing story of the call of the Prophet Elisha. Elisha was called as he was plowing the field. He slaughtered the oxen he was plowing with and used the plowing equipment for fuel to cook the flesh of the oxen and gave it his people to eat and followed Elijah through whom God had called him.

The Lord calls you to friendship, to deeper union, to be a leader, to be a minister, to serve his people.... Take time...reflect on your response.

Psalm 16

This Psalm is probably composed by a convert confessing that he has found the God of Israel his “rock” and he is taking refuge in this God. He has also found the people of God, the faithful ones, to be a delight. He muses, “how wonderful...what pleasure” to know faithful people! And he promises not to associate with the ungodly. He affirms his faith in the God of Israel as everything for him. He says, “Yahweh is all I have” and “Yahweh will lead me to life”.

**Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;
I say to the Lord, “My Lord are you.
O Lord, my allotted portion and my cup,
You it is who hold fast my lot.”**

Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Paul had taught the Galatians to trust in God’s gift of Grace and live a life of Grace. His position was that the way of Grace and the way of law were mutually exclusive. The way of the law makes salvation dependent on human achievements and the way of Grace makes a person depend on the mercy of God. The essence of Christian life was seen as a personal relationship with Jesus and not obedience to any law. With the coming of the reign of Grace, the reign of law was ended.

This led to misunderstandings and misinterpretations to the point of saying that the law did not matter and that all that mattered was trust in God’s Grace and do what you like. Now Paul set out to teach the Galatians that God’s love frees us to love and to live in the spirit of Jesus and not follow our own desires and inclinations. Those who follow Christ are guided by the spirit and they must follow the way of the spirit and not of the flesh. “If you are guided by the spirit, you are not under the law”.

You are called for freedom. Use this freedom as an opportunity to serve one another in love.

Do not consume one another (biting and tearing each other as Paul says to the Galatians) but empower one another in love.

Break the yoke of hatred, oppression, discrimination, sin, violence....and accept the yoke of freedom, harmony. Communion, fellowship....

Luke 9:51-62

This excerpt gives us the response Jesus made to those who did not welcome him and to those who wished to follow him. It also tells us about how he challenged them to remain resolute and

faithful to their mission and surrender themselves in service. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem through Samaritan territory. The Samaritans did not welcome him. James and John wanted to do something about it. They asked him if they could call down fire from heaven and destroy them. It was another way of saying, "Shall we beat their brains out?" Jesus said: Let them be. Let's go on to fulfill our mission.

Jesus journeyed into hostile territory without fear and without security measures and invited others to follow him without turning back.

Cultivate values of the Kingdom, nonviolent attitude, love of enemies, love for the "reign" of God above earthly matters, tenacity in fulfilling chosen mission.....

Someone in the crowd expressed his desire to follow Jesus and he was asked to count the cost. Jesus called others to follow him and they had various excuses and he challenged them to seize the opportunity to be involved in the kingdom.

Count the cost before you make choices and decisions. Don't get carried away with feelings and ideas of the moment..... Learn to prayerfully discern choices.

Seize the opportunity when it comes. There is tragedy in "unseized" moments. May God give us strength to make choices and decisions that will save us from the tragedy of "unseized" moments.

When you have come to know the urgency of getting out of a situation or into a new or different situation, choose to do so now. Do not wait for tomorrow. Now is the moment of Grace...Now is the kingdom.

Make a clean break from all the binding forces in your life for discipleship with Jesus.

Stay focused on the Lord and His purpose for you..... do not look back or get side-tracked..... stay focused... no turning back.

Saint of the Day, June 26 - St. Anthelm and 19 other saints are remembered this day.

Anthelm was born in 1107 in a castle near Chambéry, in Savoy, France. He was ordained a priest and visited the Carthusian Charterhouse at Portes, where he entered the Order at the age of thirty. Two years later, in 1139, he was appointed abbot of Le Grande Chartreuse, which had been damaged. He was an effective administrator there. While under his direction, the community increased in numbers and fervency. He restored and improved the buildings, including constructing a defensive wall and an aqueduct. The rules of the order were standardized and changed to allow women the opportunity to enter the order in their own

houses. He also brought the other houses of the order into closer alignment with the motherhouse.

Anthelm continued in his office almost constantly for twenty-four years, barring a period of a few years when he was a hermit. After a few years as a hermit, starting in 1152, Anthelm returned to Le Grande Chartreuse and defended Pope Alexander III against the antipope Victor IV. In 1163, the pope appointed him as bishop of Belley, France. Anthelm reformed the clergy and regulated affairs, going as far as to excommunicate a local noble, Count Humbert of Maurienne, who had taken one priest captive and murdered another priest trying to free him. When Humbert appealed to Rome and won a reversal, Anthelm left Belley in protest. Pope Alexander then sent Anthelm to England to mediate the dispute between Henry II and St. Thomas Becket. Anthelm was unable to undertake that journey. He returned to Belley to care for the poor and for the local lepers. Anthelm died on June 26, 1178.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not.
Just be grateful for what you have and let them bless you with joy.**