



Homily for  
THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
03/04 September, 2016

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**Fr. Dwayne's homily follows....**

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – Cycle C – 2016  
September 4, 2016  
Holy Spirit (SH/HT)

Wis 9:13-18b  
Phil 9-10, 12-17  
Lk 14:25-33

- I. The teaching of Jesus we just heard in the gospel is something we don't want to hear - or at least we struggle to understand: "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, cannot be my disciple."
- the word "hate" is pretty harsh: we think of it as a complete turning against someone
  - it would have sounded much more harsh to Jesus' original audience. People of his time did not have any concept of individual identity. They saw themselves only within the context of their family or clan or village. To turn against that group would have been the same as death. we don't want to hear –
  - does Jesus really mean what he says? Yes he does! But not with the harshness we understand with the word "hate."
  - within the context of other scripture passages we get a clearer picture of what Jesus means.
  - recall, for example the time when Jesus family wanted to see him and his response was that his brothers and sisters are those who hear the word of God and keep it.
  - or the time when someone said "Blessed is womb that carried you and the breasts that nursed you," and Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

- so what Jesus is saying is that we are called to be part of a new and larger community – his community of disciples AND he means our relationship with must take precedence over everything else – including family as well as material possessions and anything else we find attractive.

- so Jesus isn't asking us to walk away from families. In fact, the family may be the best place where we can show God's love.

- but, nevertheless, Jesus' teaching remains very difficult to live

II. As disciples of Jesus, we are always faced with making a decision: is it going to be Jesus or something else?

- we know that someone like St. Paul constantly made that decision

- as he writes to Philemon in the second reading, St. Paul is in prison: his decision to follow Jesus resulted in his imprisonment

- and it's very interesting to see how he resolves this issue with Onesimus, who apparently was a run away slave.

- Philemon, the owner, would have been within his legal rights to severely punish Onesimus – but Paul appeals to Philemon to take a higher road: to treat Onesimus not as a slave, but as a brother in the Lord.

- he is asking Philemon to choose his relationship with Jesus over his legal rights towards Onesimus

III. And what of us? When are we ever called to choose our love for Jesus above other concerns and attractions?

- I think, for example, of students making a decision concerning school. As a teacher in Catholic schools, I know there were instances of students who came to the Catholic school precisely because of their faith. And I also know, there were instances of students who went to the Catholic school without parental support. Students told me their parents said they could go to Wahlert, but they would have to pay their own tuition.
- and I know of college students who were intent on going to a Catholic college – again because their faith was important to them and they wanted to nurture their faith.
- have you ever heard of someone declining a job promotion because it undermined their relationship with the Lord – or their faith? Or have heard of someone leaving a position or changing within a company because they environment they were in was toxic? It was damaging their faith?

- or, do you know of people who have given up very lucrative positions so that they could enter more directly, or even full time, in Church ministry – at a much lesser pay rate
- sometimes our love for the Lord causes us to take positions within a family which brings disagreement, division and strained relationships. Parents may need to stand up for what they believe is right even if it strains relationships with children and grandchildren.

IV. If we think about it – there are many examples of people who really take this message of Jesus seriously – it is certainly difficult to do – but it is a healthy challenge for us to consider: does following Jesus make any difference in my life?

What has it cost you to be a disciple of Jesus?

- have you ever taken a stand which causes you to stand apart – or invited criticism?
- have works of justice or almsgiving or stewardship caused you to have less property or investments?
- have you sought changes in employment or positions in a company precisely because you were concerned for your relationship with Jesus?

V. Our responsorial psalm today reminds of the fleeting nature of life. In the end, what is to be gained from the towers we've built...the battles we've won...the size of our bank account...the fame and human status we've achieved?

In the end, what really matters is living in right relationship with others and with Jesus. This should be our first priority above all else.