

23 Sunday C

September 4, 2022

St. Patrick

The Gospel starts off promisingly: **“Large crowds were travelling with Jesus.”**

“Large crowds,” that is, a lot of folks had joined the journey.

Now, I have to tell you: I don’t like this Gospel passage. It seems like Jesus wants to thin out those big numbers of folks. Yes, for ten chapters in St. Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is making that long journey to Jerusalem: to his suffering and death at Calvary. At the start of that journey, St. Luke’s Gospel tells us that Jesus **“stiffened his face”** (9:51). He was focused. Like a marathon runner for St. Jude’s race in December, that runner has got to be fixated, single-minded, on where she’s headed. Not just at the race’s start, but all the way.

And you can’t wake up that Saturday morning and say, “I’m going to run the marathon!” No, it takes training. It takes motivation. Like Jesus, you’ve got to **“stiffen your face,”** being fully focused.

St. Patrick’s: The last line of this Sunday’s Gospel would thin out that **“large crowd”** following Jesus. Listen again: **“Whoever of you does not give up all their possessions cannot be my disciple.”**

“...all your possessions.” That could give that **“large crowd”** pause!

That ought to give us pause.

At this point on his journey Jesus starts off and agitates us big time. He even tells us to “hate”! **“Whoever comes to me and does not hate their father and mother, spouse and children, sisters and brothers, yes, and even their life itself, cannot be my disciple.”** C’mon! Jesus is talking crazy!

Jesus is exaggerating. He wants to get our attention. If we’re going to stay with him all the way to Calvary, nothing—no one—can take priority. Even my own life...and yours.

Money, possessions, stuff—we can’t make it with Jesus on the long journey if we’re weighed down.

Of the four gospels, it is St. Luke’s Gospel which most has Jesus speaking about money. In the community for which he wrote this Gospel, there were both wealthy

and the poor. In this Gospel Jesus teaches what the 4th century Bishop, St. Ambrose, later taught: **“If the world is given to all, and not only to the rich, how can we organize the economy to make sure that everyone has enough resources for a decent life?”** (1)

Friends: Each of us is called to sift out what we need, and what we can share. Surprisingly, we have a model of Gospel simplicity in Pope Francis. When he was chosen Bishop of Rome in 2013, he chose the name Francis, whose life of simplicity was well-known and famous. Then, when they started leading Pope Francis to the opulent papal apartments, he declined. He went on the bus with the cardinals to the simply hotel on the Vatican grounds. That night, and he still does, Pope Francis chose to live in a modest apartment.

“Large crowds were travelling with Jesus.” By the time he reached Calvary, though, most had slithered away. No one, nothing, can take priority over Jesus. This Sunday, I ask myself: Am I going to be a spectator on the sidelines, or truly follow Jesus, unburdened?

Are you?

(1) Quoted by Bill Moore, *Sunday by Sunday*, September 4, 2022, 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (volume 31, number 49).

General Intercessions

September 4, 2020

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lead us, the church, in giving our dedicated allegiance to Jesus and form us as his disciples; we pray to you, O Lord—

On this Labor Day weekend...Empower us to secure safe work conditions and a living family wage for all laborers; we pray to you, O Lord—

Help us to balance work with prayer, leisure, and time for others; we pray to you, O Lord—

Give patience and perseverance to those who perform tedious jobs for the well-being of others; we pray to you, O Lord—

Remove violence, kidnapping, and abuse from our city and world. Make us true peacemakers; we pray to you, O Lord—

Protect immigrants and refugees from forced family separation, and enkindle the fire of your love in those who advocate their well-being; we pray to you, O Lord—

**Welcome into the light of your face all who have gone before us in
faith, especially Jerry Wynne and Barbara McLellan;
we pray to you, O Lord—**