

Discipleship Means No Excuses

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Recently, a friend and I were talking about attending the funeral of another friend, when she asked me if I would call a woman, who lives on my street, and offer her a ride. I already would have one handicapped person in the car and did not want to offer another elderly person a ride. I came up with several excuses for not making the call and when I finally did call, I did it at a time when I knew I could leave a message! I am not proud of myself! And now, I write a Gospel reflection about disciples not excusing themselves from good works!

In today's Gospel from Luke, there is no question that discipleship makes great demands on our availability, our abilities, and our assets. If, through our sacramental life in the Church, we accept Jesus Christ the Son of God and our Savior, then we must be prepared to give up every earthly thing we hold dear to gain something more precious – unity with Christ in God's eternal kingdom. Jesus offers three invitations which constitute a "how-to" of discipleship:

First: Jesus invites us to live in a relationship with his Father that is primary above earthly relatives. Discipleship does not mean denying our feelings for our family; rather it is lifestyle of consistently choosing to act and make choices for the kingdom of God. And, as we model good works and the attitude that God is all, we also lead those we love into the kingdom.

Second: Jesus' invitation to carry the cross is a prophetic call. If we act and choose a closeness to God above all else, then we must expect hardship. We are called to disentangle ourselves from the people, possessions, and power that distract us from pursuing life in God's kingdom. We expect daily trials that challenge our desire to put God first. However, disciples consistently make the effort.

Third: Jesus' invitation to give up possessions. Many of us have experienced how things can become our gods – e.g., cell phones and other devices with accessory upon accessory. Giving up possessions leads us to faithful stewardship to directing our material gifts to the service of the Gospel, to the care of our brothers and sisters, and to the protection of the resources of God's creation.

The hard reality of today's Gospel passage is that for the disciple, there are no excuses for not accepting Jesus' invitation. While my neighbor had a ride to the funeral, I missed an opportunity to be generous. Discipleship is all about daily choices to put God first in our lives. And, always our efforts are supported by the graces that help make our good works possible.