

September 4, 2022

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wis 9:13-18b

Phmn 9-10, 12-17

Lk 14:25-33

#### GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

GROW: Often, before writing these reflections, I take a minute to pray. I decided to add a minute of mindfulness using my new Apple Watch, which conveniently provides a meditation prompt. Today's happened to be: "Bring to mind a close relationship that can be challenging, and think about what it can teach you." Like those paper messages in fortune cookies, even this auto-generated prompt carried a grain of truth. Our thoughts may turn to our spouse, a prickly co-worker, or a moody teen. However, given today's readings, it struck me that this description can also fit our relationship with Jesus. Yes, we know that Jesus loves us, shepherds us, forgives us ... but he also challenges us! He reminds us today that being a disciple requires that we go all in, prepared to place our relationship with Jesus above all else. Easier said than done. But we can start, one minute at a time, with our prayers, priorities, and actions. We can also follow the example of saints such as Paul, imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, and the saints among us who teach us by example.

#### GO EVANGELIZE | PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

GO: I bet we all know people we would consider saints, or at least well on their way: A compassionate friend, a priest or lay minister at our parish, a generous neighbor, that person who has not let suffering and loss shake their faith. Then there are the saints we Catholics celebrate each day: Francis, who threw off the cloak of privilege to live for Christ; Mother Teresa, who served others day in and day out even as she faced a spiritual drought; Paul, the one-time persecutor who built up the early Church and whose letters continue to inspire Christians. Each of them took Jesus' words at face value and laid down their lives for him. Learning how to be a disciple of Christ from studying the lives of the saints can be an ongoing pursuit throughout our lives. But perhaps we can also learn from a "living saint," if the opportunity presents itself, and ask, in so many words, "what's your secret?" It may be praying first thing in the morning, or something practical that we had not considered, such as managing their time in such a way that allows them to volunteer regularly or to be a continuous presence in the life of someone who needs them. If other priorities have gotten in the way of our relationship with Jesus, perhaps we can challenge ourselves to develop new habits. Even an incremental change – such as spending less time or money on nonessentials or reading an inspirational book – can help us reignite our faith and free up our time to focus on someone or something other than ourselves.

STUDY: Take time to read about the lives of a few saints. What habits did they create to lead holy lives? What vices did they give up for Christ's sake to truly become his disciple?