

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

1 Peter 2:9

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation;

announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 10:37-42; L97A

Jesus said to his apostles:

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,

and whoever

loves son or

daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

and whoever does not take up his cross

and follow after me is not worthy of me.

“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet

will receive a prophet’s reward,

and whoever receives a righteous man

because he is a righteous man

will receive a righteous man’s reward.

And whoever gives only a cup of cold water

to one of these little ones to drink

because the little one is a disciple—

amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”



Reflecting on the Gospel

Whenever there is a discussion about prayer, the question that most often arises is about distractions. We have every good intention to keep ourselves focused on God, but our mind tends to have a mind of its own! Our thoughts wander. We begin to think about what we forgot to buy at the grocery but need to make dinner, why the youngsters aren’t home yet, the harsh words we exchanged with someone, how exhausted we are, why we can’t figure out the new cell phone. Our behaviors and choices can wander, too. We are serious about following Jesus’ commandment of love, but find ourselves slipping when we choose to fritter

away time on too much TV watching rather than spending it with someone who is lonely, or when we stretch a fifteen-minute break at work into a half hour, or when we needlessly tear into another over some small annoyance. It is so difficult for us to be consistently single-minded about prayer and Gospel living. In fact, it is pretty difficult for us to be single-minded about anything! In this Sunday’s gospel Jesus is calling his apostles (and us) to single-mindedness.

Jesus clearly states that he is to be above everyone and everything in our lives—even family. This is a pretty radical single-mindedness! But this does not mean that we ignore others. Jesus also says that whoever receives his followers receives him. Jesus is reminding us that our relationship to him is expressed in our relationship with each other. In giving and receiving we make evident that Jesus is the center and focus of our lives. In giving and receiving we lose our lives for the sake of others. In giving and receiving

we find fullness of Life—Jesus himself.

We can’t receive unless someone gives. When we think about it, so much of our lives depends upon the generosity of others. And all life and everything we do depends upon the utter generosity of God. God gives everything. God created this world, God saves us from our wandering, God graces us with divine Presence and love. God’s greatest Gift, of course, is the divine Son. Jesus took on our human flesh with all its weaknesses, except that Jesus never sinned. Because Jesus understands our tendency to wander, he reminds us to keep love of God above everyone and everything, full well knowing how difficult that is for us. Full well knowing how willing we are to “take up his cross” but then stumble through our wandering into selfishness and greed and putting ourselves first.

Jesus reminds us that we cannot always be takers. To “take up his cross” and lose our life for Jesus’ sake means that we must be givers as well as receivers. In giving to each other we learn to receive from God. In giving to each other we learn the self-giving that defines a disciple of Jesus. In giving to each other we learn that we are Jesus’ Presence to others, even when we wander.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Jesus calls us to form a good habit of thinking about others as we think about him and ourselves. He is not asking us to neglect ourselves, but to become as generous in our self-giving as he is. On our own this would be nigh impossible. We have his assurance that in giving we find life, in giving we find the reward of the righteous, in giving we find him. Every act of self-giving is really an act of receiving! The “reward” we receive is strengthened relationships, being drawn to Jesus so we wander less, the satisfaction of knowing we have lightened another’s burden, the abiding Presence of Jesus himself and the fullness of Life he offers to those who are faithful.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: more than me, follow after me, loses his life . . . find it, receives you receives me

To the point: In this gospel Jesus clearly states that he is to be above everyone and everything in our lives—even family. But this does not mean that we ignore others. Jesus also says that whoever receives his followers receives him. In giving and receiving we make evident that Jesus is the center and focus of our lives. In giving and receiving we lose our lives for the sake of others. In giving and receiving we find fullness of Life—Jesus himself.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The Shunemite woman acted as Jesus urges in the gospel. She opened her home—her self—in hospitality to Elisha the prophet of God who visited her. In giving to Elisha, she received new life—the promise of a son.

to experience: Receiving a gift always implies a giver. Giving and receiving is relational. When Jesus is the center of our lives, our giving and receiving is not only about ourselves and others, but about Jesus himself.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In singing this responsorial psalm we proclaim that the God who has rewarded a woman for showing hospitality to a prophet (first reading) is the same God who shows faithfulness and offers salvation to Israel for “all generations” (psalm). But the words we hear Jesus speak in the gospel are not so comforting. To be faithful to him, we must give up everything, from our most significant relationships (mother, father, son, daughter) to our very lives. Nonetheless, we can sing about the “goodness of the Lord” (psalm) because Jesus also promises reward for even the smallest gesture done in his name. Faithful discipleship carries great demands, but no act, no choice, no response made in Jesus’ name will go unacknowledged by God, who will sing forever of our goodness and fidelity.

to psalmist preparation: In the gospel, what is Christ asking of you? What is Christ promising you? Are you willing to pay the price? How does the psalm help you hear the promise and choose to pay its price?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- I struggle to keep Jesus as the center and focus of my life when . . .
- I tend to ignore others when . . . What brings me back to losing my life for their sake is . . .
- What I give to others . . . for others . . . What I receive is . . .

PRESIDERS

I find it easiest to lose my life for the sake of those whom I serve when . . . I receive new life in that . . .

DEACONS

When I lose myself in serving others, they become for me . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

Like the Shunemite woman in the first reading, my hospitality welcomes others and . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

My music making gives to others . . . I receive back from them . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

When I lose myself as I serve at the altar, I become for others . . .

LECTORS

When I lose myself in God’s word, my proclamation becomes . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

My manner of distributing Holy Communion indicates that Jesus is the center and focus of my life when I . . .