

What It Takes to Follow...



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Wis 9:13-18a)

The question

¹³For who knows **God's counsel**,/ or who can conceive what the Lord intends?ⁿ/

The answer

¹⁴For the deliberations of mortals are timid,/ and uncertain our plans./ ¹⁵*For the corruptible body burdens the soul/ and the earthly tent weighs down the mind with its many concerns./^o ¹⁶Scarcely can we guess the things on earth,/ and only with difficulty grasp what is at hand;/ but **things in heaven**, who can search them out?^p

The question

¹⁷Or who can know your **counsel**, unless you give **Wisdom**/ and send **your holy spirit from on high**?/^q ¹⁸*Thus were the paths of those on earth made straight,/ and people learned what pleases you,/ and were saved by **Wisdom**./^r

THE FOCUS: God's Counsel

COMMENTARY

- The book of Wisdom is a deuterocanonical book, meaning, it is not included in the Hebrew Canon.
- We, Catholics, recognize it as canonical

because it is found in the Septuagint (*LXX*, Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible).

- V.13 contains two questions in parallel form: who can know God's counsel // who can conceive God's intent?
- The expected answer is no one.
- The reasons are in vv.15-16:
 - We humans are timid, unsure.
 - Our corruptible body burdens // earthen dwelling weighs down the mind (*We are distracted by many concerns. We are not focused. Our minds can never soar to the highest heavens*).
- V.17 is another question similar to v.13.

REFLECTIONS

No human being can read the mind (intent, wisdom) of God. Our intellect is limited to understand God's way.

The reasons: we are timid, unsure, mortals, have material concerns. We can not even understand what is on earth, that is within our grasp.

But if we capture the mind of God (his counsel, wisdom and spirit), the result is that we humans walk on the right paths.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14-17)

**IN EVERY AGE, O LORD,
YOU HAVE BEEN OUR REFUGE.**

SECOND READING (Phlm 9-10;12-17)

⁹I rather urge you out of love, being as I am, Paul, an old man,* and now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus. ¹⁰I urge you on behalf of my child **Onesimus**, whose father I have become in my imprisonment, ¹³I should have liked to retain him for myself, so that he might **serve*** me on your behalf in my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but voluntary. ¹⁵Perhaps this is why he was away from* you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶**no** longer as a **slave** but more than a slave, a **brother**, beloved especially to me, but even more so to you, as a man* and in the Lord. ¹⁷So if you regard me as a partner, welcome him as you would me.

THE FOCUS: Onesimus, a slave-brother

COMMENTARY

- The Letter to Philemon is the shortest letter of Paul.
- Paul urges Philemon to welcome back his runaway slave, now not as a slave but as a brother (v.16). The reason: Onesimus has become child of Paul [by baptism] (v.9).
- Onesimus ran away from him (after defrauding him, v.18) that Philemon might have him back for ever (v.15).
- When he comes back, he is no longer a slave but a brother, a man, in the Lord.
- Paul appeals to Philemon's Christian upbringing and partnership in the spread of Christian faith (v.17).

REFLECTIONS

Paul is imprisoned (in Rome), not free, but speaks tenderly of the freedom of Onesimus (who came from Colossae) to his friend Philemon.

Paul considers himself old, and a father of Onesimus by virtue of his baptism.

When we become Christians, we become free. We should not be slaves of anyone.

Paul's appeal to welcome Onesimus back is a call to reconciliation, a call to be equal, to be free, to be a brother. It is based on the new status of life: being a Christian.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 14:25-33)

Context of journey to Jerusalem: First teaching on discipleship

²⁵*Great crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and addressed them, ²⁶“If any one comes to me without hating his father* and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my **disciple**.

Second teaching on discipleship

²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my **disciple**.

Two parables on discipleship

²⁸Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? ²⁹Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him ³⁰and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’ ³¹Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? ³²But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms.

Third teaching on discipleship

³³o In the same way, everyone of you who

does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my **disciple**.

THE FOCUS: Discipleship

COMMENTARY

- “Great crowds” in v.25 is very encouraging. It means many people are journeying with him, taking some inputs.
- Jesus has three teachings on quality discipleship: One, to hate (renounce) one’s loved ones (v.26). Two, to carry his own cross and follow him (v.27). Three, to renounce all possessions (v.33). **The three rules are necessary to follow Jesus.**
- Christian discipleship asks you to give up your legitimate relationships, your convenience, and your properties.
 - The first of two parables on discipleship teaches the recruits to calculate how much you are giving up in order to finish the job.
 - The second parable also teaches recruits to calculate and be wise and be diplomatic.
 - Both parables teach the would-be disciples to be intelligent disciples.
- When you follow Jesus, it must be all the way through. Before you take the challenge, you know you can do it. You have your inner resources.
- You do not give up in the middle of the struggle.

REFLECTIONS

Jesus is very demanding to us who would like to be his disciples. He means business. He wants us to renounce everything (family, comfort, and properties). We cannot become disciples of Christ if we are attached to them. To be a disciple of Christ means choosing higher values (values of the kingdom). Discipleship is radical following of the footsteps of Jesus. It is not just learning something and then going your own way. It is total journeying with Jesus (up to Mt. Calvary). It is total learning from Jesus.

Friends and relatives and selfish interest mitigate discipleship. They tend to distract you from totally following Jesus.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about God’s counsel (mind, wisdom). The Second Reading talks about the freedom of Onesimus. The Gospel Reading talks about the cost of discipleship.

How to develop your sharing / homily

Share a person whom you consider a great teacher or master.

Why do you consider this one your idol? (*has qualities I can not find in myself, in my family, etc. Has a lot of good ideas to share; has a pleasing personality, etc.*)

How do you respond to this idol? (*I read books. I compile works. I attend conferences and seminars of the idol. I take notes, etc.*)

Jesus is a great teacher and master. He has a lot of great things (wisdom, food for thought) to share with us.

Many are attracted to him because of his consoling words. He touches a lot of people. He heals all their wounds. He gives hope to the hopeless.

Now, to those who would like to follow him more, to get to know him more, he demands abandonment of families and friends and total dedication of themselves to him.

Discipleship is not just learning some of Jesus’ teachings, but all of his teachings. Discipleship is a life-time process and commitment.

Discipleship is journeying with Jesus up to the finish.

It is undergoing the passion, death and resurrection with him.

Christian discipleship demands detachment from material possessions.

Christ demands a total conversion and an overhaul of value system.

We should not withhold anything from him. Jesus wants a total commitment to him. We must be hundred percent devoted to him.

We cannot be Christ's disciples, if we do not know the will of God, if we are not learned in his ways (First Reading).

We cannot be Christ's disciples, if we do not give freedom to our brothers and sisters (Second Reading).

We cannot be Christ's true disciples, if we are not detached or free from our loved ones and material things, and if we are not willing to bear our cross (burdens), if we are not willing to take sacrifices (Gospel Reading).

Christian discipleship is identification with Christ:

- a. who walked around teaching, healing and forgiving people.
- b. who went around without relatives and friends bogging him down in his mission.
- c. who appeared to people without baggage and paraphernalia.
- d. who was totally free to do God's will and his own itinerary.

If we are willing to follow Christ in his difficult mission, we have to determine if we can do it.

We have to know ourselves and our resources.

We must be humble enough to admit our limitations.

We translate the theme of discipleship in our parishes and communities:

- a. by allowing ourselves to be put into our proper places.
- b. by sharing our particular charisms and God-given talents.
- c. by willingly allowing ourselves to be hurt in the process.

Christian discipleship is not dictating what others should do, but discerning what Jesus wants us to do. What kind of disciple are you?

The eucharist is a sacrament of perfect discipleship.

In the eucharist, we acknowledge that Christ

is our Lord and master. We are just his followers, trying hard to learn from him.

In the eucharist, we affirm our commitment to journey with him, to share in his mission to spread the kingdom of God.

The eucharist strengthens us to become true disciples of Jesus Christ.

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III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Filipinos are obliged by the government to pay their taxes honestly.

2. Water Crisis in Metro Manila, artificial or natural?

3. Is there an increasing social involvement of parishioners in your local church?

4. Reflect on the lyrics of the traditional

Pasyon:

*O Diyos sa kalangitan
Hari ng Sangkalupaan
Dios na walang kapantay
Mabait, lubhang maalam
At puno ng karunungan.*

*Ikaw ang Amang tibobos
Na nagungulilang lubos
Amang di matapus-tapos
Maawai't mapagkukop
Sa taong lupa't alabok.*

5. September 8 is the birthday of the Blessed Virgin. What shall we do to honor her? **(HM)**