

## Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Rev. Christopher Weekly S.J.

It was a mob scene, the gospel tells us.

“Great crowds were traveling with Jesus,” pressing upon him.

Friends . . . if you’ve been following the thread of Luke’s gospel these summer months you may have noticed that a kind of momentum is building, and the crowds following Jesus have been growing. For weeks we’ve heard Jesus gather his disciples . . . , He’s taught about the importance of prayer . . . and of keeping the Great Commandment. He’s called them to a standard of holiness that surpasses that of the Pharisees.

And, as we heard last week, many of the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, those who have felt the healing touch of Christ are running after him as heads toward Jerusalem, and begging the disciples to give them a place at the table. Some in the growing crowd are taking sweet delight in how Jesus is challenging the religious authorities of his day. Others are hoping he is the political figure who will finally send the Roman occupiers packing. There are more than a few mixed motives for following Jesus. It is something of a mob scene as we catch up with Jesus today. So Jesus turns toward this great crowd and speaks sharp , exaggerated words, hyperbolic words, anything to grab their attention: “If you come to me without hating your father and mother . . . “If you do not renounce all your possessions, you cannot be my disciple.”

Friends, these are words that should also grab us, and challenge us (like those following Jesus) to think about what we are doing with our lives, as we run after Jesus. And I’d also like to suggest, as pastor, this is a fruitful gospel to begin a new reflection on our mission, as we begin our second century together here at St. Joe’s.

In many ways, we’ve reached our Centennial as part of a “great crowd,” the “mob” of diverse Christians that has made the United States one of the most church-going, religiously observant nations in the world. To adapt the gospel images . . . We’ve calculated the costs and raised the funds to build schools and churches, hospitals and college campuses, outreach centers for the poor. Our parish, like many American congregations, has multiplied programs over the years to try and meet the needs of people from cradle to grave. But in the face of such material success, Jesus says, we must continually ask ourselves what our priorities are. When we are so busy about so many good things, we need to pause, and remember that anything wise we may have accomplished along the way is not from us, but from God . . . God, whose holy spirit comes to us from on high. And real discipleship, any lasting accomplishment, Jesus says, begins with renunciation, with simplifi-

cation of life, even a letting-go of long-standing relationships if these are covering-up our thirst for God.

This challenging gospel has practical implications for us as we being the new school year, in our new century. One of the things that has surprised me, after several years here at St. Joe’s, is just how busy so many of us are. And because of this busy-ness, for a parish of our size, we have a surprisingly difficult time getting enough volunteers to help run the various programs families are interested in. What I’d like to invite this weekend, in the spirit of this gospel, is for all of us to re-evaluate our priorities, in order to give some of our time, our gifts, to the parish. Are we willing to relinquish, to let go of something in our life, to make space for a little discipleship work at the parish?

Challenging as this can be, I’ve been inspired in the past couple weeks talking to two families with young children who have decided to simplify. These families have decided that the kids will do one activity this fall, not several, so that there will be other time free . . . to play, to have dinner as a family a few nights per week, time to come as a family to church on Sundays. I actually believe such a choice is radically true to today’s gospel, in a mob culture that is over-busy, multi-tasking, head-spinning with activity.

So friends, if you’d like to sing or play an instrument in one of our choirs, but are just too busy . . . If you love to be with community elders but feel you don’t have the time . . . If you care about passing the faith to our children but are stressed when you look at your calendar . . . If you feel something like this . . . can you imagine Jesus inviting, “Is there something you can let go of the year, To live more deeply the call to discipleship here at St. Joe’s?”

Today’s gospel suggests that such a change would not simply be a nice thing. For Jesus longs for us to hear this voice, cutting through the maddening crowds in our culture, rising above all the competing voices in our society. Christ is quite direct and wants to awaken us again to the necessity of changing some of our relationships, and of letting-go of all the we cling to if we are to be counted among his disciples. None of our activity, none of our fundraising and plans this year will help us unless we first re-orient ourselves toward Christ, and become willing to expend our time and resources not on ourselves, but on the God whose love for us surpasses all we can imagine.

So friends, let us help on another in the days to ahead step aside from the mob, and let go of what holds us back, and follow Christ on the path of true discipleship.

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Wisdom 9:13-19

Philemon 1:9-17

Luke 14:25-33

September 8, 2013

# 靈 修 生 活

## 常 年 期 第 二 十 三 主 日

白 正 龍 副 主 教

### 主題：只有天主的智慧才能使人認知祂的旨意

#### 講道摘要：

當耶穌回答一個法學士的質問，那條誡命是最大的之時，祂答說：「『你應全心、全靈、全意愛上主你的天主。』這是最大也是第一條誡命。第二條與此相似：你應當愛你的近人，如你自己。全部法律和先知，都繫於這兩條誡命。(瑪二二 36~40) 愛人如己，是「如同愛自己的身體一樣；因為從來沒有人恨過自己的肉身，反而培養撫育它，一如基督之對教會。」(弗五 28~29) 也正如「若說我愛天主，卻又惱恨自己的弟兄姊妹，便是說謊的；因為那不自愛自己所看見的弟兄姊妹，就不能愛自己所看不見的天主。那愛天主的，也該愛自己的弟兄姊妹。」(若壹，四 20~21) 因此，「全心、全靈、全意愛天主」也就與「全心、全靈、全意愛人如己」劃成等號，意謂著愛人就是愛天主的具體表現。

「跟隨耶穌」作基督的門徒---基督徒，基本上就是如基督一樣，成為天主愛人的具體工程：「天主竟這樣愛了世界，甚至賜下了自己的獨生子，使凡信祂的人不致喪亡，反而獲得永生。」(若三 16)我們因而成了天主賜與世界得救的禮物，也因此，我們也應如耶穌一樣，畢生在天主愛人，救人的計劃中，在「祂的父那裡。」(路二 49)。

正如智慧篇上所說的：「誰能知道天主的計劃？誰能想像上主的意願？」(智九 13)「如果不賜予智慧，從高天派遣祂的聖神，誰能知道祂的旨意呢？」(智九 17) 確實如此。當耶穌說：「如果誰要跟隨我，他應愛我，勝過愛自己的父母、妻子、兒女、兄弟姊妹，甚至自己的性命。凡是不背著自己的十字架跟隨我的，也不配做我的門徒。」(路十四 26~27) 表面上看來，耶穌的這幾句話，確實使人有其他的聯想，覺得太不近情理。一個非常重視「家庭」的宗教，如何能教人放棄自己的家族、家人、血親，甚至部落或政黨等等，只為要跟隨耶穌作基督徒呢？

基督今天又說了兩個譬喻來說明，人們為到世上的目的，所依靠的都是放在金錢和人力方面：「如果有人想建築樓房，哪有不事先坐下來計算費用，看是否有足夠的財力足以完成？一個國王要去和別的國王交戰，哪有不先坐下來想一想，能否用一萬人去抵抗對方的兩萬人？」(路十四 28~31)。

從事地上的事物，我們常想到金錢和人力，因此，我們也很重視我們自己的家族、家人，甚至所謂「意念相同的人」。然而這些也正是我們跟隨耶穌，作祂門徒的阻礙。做耶穌的門徒---基督徒，就要跳脫這些障礙。跳脫血緣和意念的束縛，而全心、全靈、全意地愛耶穌，愛耶穌的最小的兄弟姐妹。正如保祿宗徒勸勉費肋孟一，他要費肋孟永遠收留敖乃息摩，不再拿他(敖乃息摩)當作奴隸，要遠超過奴隸，以親愛的弟兄相待(費 15~16)，又說：「如果你把他當作同伴，就請你收留他，如同收留我一樣」(17)。

能不能如禮運大同篇上所說的：「不獨子其子，親其親」「老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼」一般的，在我們的近人身上事奉耶穌基督呢？跳脫人世間的束縛是至為重要，為要真誠歸依基督，以成為天主的兒女，成為與基督同為承繼者，並獲得生命，獲得更豐富的生命，我們卻只有捨棄我們所擁有的一切，才能如耶穌一樣，承受天主所賜的那超越一切的「基督徒」名號。

摘自「教友生活周刊」