

Sunday Message

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year C • 4 September 2022 • Season Colour: Green • Psalter Week 3

WITH EYES WIDE OPEN

LUKE 14:25-33



We all know the importance of good planning. If you're doing an exam and have to answer five questions in two hours, you need to calculate how much time to give to each question.

If you're going somewhere by car, you need to ensure you have enough petrol, especially when travelling in the countryside at night.

It happened to me a few years ago. I headed west late one evening with the petrol tank less than half full. I told myself there was enough to reach my destination. But then, as the clock wound past midnight and forecourts closed for the night, the gauge on my dashboard kept creeping towards empty. I began to fret. I worried that the car would grind to a halt in the middle of nowhere, and I'd be stuck like an idiot in a crisis of my own making. All I had needed to do was top up the tank before I left, but I'd been too lazy. I had taken a risk. I crawled to my destination with the amber light flashing insistently.

Good planning is essential if we don't want to miscalculate and mess up. Good planning is what Jesus is talking about in today's Gospel. If you're going to follow him, he says, you need to calculate precisely what that means. You need to be clear as to what it entails. You need to know what you're committing yourself to because it won't be easy.

Being his follower will involve making tough decisions and hard choices. It will mean taking up your cross every day. It may even include laying down your life.

Jesus uses an extreme example to make his point. Choosing him, he says, means putting him before your nearest and dearest, even your own family. It means putting him first in everything, whatever the consequences.

Like someone building a tower or a king going out to war, we must calculate what we are getting ourselves into. We must approach it with eyes wide open. ■

DO

Calculate the cost of discipleship and measure it against your life right now; measure it against all you hold dear. Are you willing to stick your neck out for the Gospel? Are you all-in?

PRAY

Pray for Christians everywhere, especially those who risk their lives every day for the sake of the Gospel.



SAY

Lord, help me to follow you to the best of my ability. Help me to always put you first. Amen.

LEARN

The true disciple puts Jesus Christ and his teaching above everything else.

To follow Jesus faithfully is the wisest calculation any person can make.

Religion is not a hobby, a private concern – like golf or yoga or football. Everything we do must be at the service of God's kingdom.

REFLECT

For most of us, following Jesus doesn't mean risking our lives or going against our family. Still, putting Jesus first is risky because it means going against the grain. It means doing things that the cool people think are foolish.

Some time ago, a 16-year-old second-level student submitted an essay to our office about the challenge of being a young Catholic today. Sean wrote about going on a retreat with his grandfather and how it led to a deepening of his faith. He used to go to Mass until then but was a bit embarrassed about his religion. It wasn't a full-on commitment. Now that had changed. This is a section of his essay:

I returned home from the retreat refreshed and with a newfound determination not to compartmentalise my faith anymore, but to let it affect

everything I did. I wanted to bear witness to Christ, not by making grandiose declarations about religion – that only alienates others – but by humbly going about my business with a consistent prayer life in the knowledge that God will show the way.

I faced several challenges to my faith in the past year in school. After the retreat, I decided I'd never again fail to attend Sunday Mass. This had often occurred during school trips away where the group mentality amongst the students didn't entertain the idea of Mass on such occasions. I was too afraid to open my mouth on those trips, so I didn't go either.

But things had changed. My resolve was tested when our class won a trip to France. Two weeks before we left, I politely explained to the teacher that if I

couldn't attend Mass, then I couldn't go on the trip. Later, when the class heard we'd all be attending Mass in Paris, there was some grumbling directed towards me – thankfully, most of it in good humour. We ended up in Notre Dame, and although I couldn't understand a word, the mystique and beauty was something else. Even some of my friends admitted they'd enjoyed the experience.

During this past year, through God's grace, I've already gone from being afraid to talk about my faith to writing articles about it. To anyone who struggles with faith, I'd say, don't give up; keep persevering! Look for God with a courageous heart and an open mind, and you'll always succeed."

Sean calculated the cost of discipleship and was prepared to pay it. The challenge for each of us is to do likewise. ■