

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time Bb

It's election time. You probably received your ballots already in the mail. To vote wisely, people need to know the candidates well. One way of knowing them is to watch them in their public debate. For example, here in Oregon, there are three gubernatorial debates that were scheduled. These debates somehow give the people the idea of who the candidates are and what they are fighting for, and so help them to decide whom are they going to vote for.

In our spiritual life, there is politics too. There is that constant debate happening within our lives. It is the battle between two powerful figures, one of which offers and asks for hard things and the other one, offers and asks for easy things.

Leader 1 says: "You must learn to control your desires and ambitions."

But Leader 2 replies: "No, let yourself go. Do what you want."

Leader 1 declares: "God sometimes sends crosses into your life. You must learn to carry them, just as I did for you."

But Leader 2 retorts: "you should be angry with God for all the crosses and pain you have. You deserve better than that."

Leader 1 continues: "you must think first of others before you think of yourself."

But Leader 2 argues: "If you do not think of yourself, no one else will."

Leader 1 reminds: "Do not be foolish to use all your energy getting more and more power and money and fame. They don't matter much in your spiritual life."

But Leader 2 sarcastically responds: "Nonsense! Money, power, and fame are the only things which make this life worth living."

Pretty intense debate, right? One speaks of generosity, patience and spiritual strength. The other speaks of self-gratification, impatience and spiritual blame. We all know who the leader 1 is. It is our Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us a choice to take the straight narrow path. The second is Satan, the Deceiver, the one who continues to divide us and tempt us to choose the easy way out.

And in our gospel today, it seemed that Satan got the best out of James and John and the other disciples. James and John longed to be the firsts among the disciples. They wanted the power, the glory and the fame in following Jesus. The other ten were no better. They were indignant and envious. What about us? They also wanted to be the

firsts, to sit at Jesus right and left hand as well. But Jesus reprimanded them. Listen to me, "If you want to be the greatest among you, you should become the servant of all. If you want to be first, you need to be the slave of all." If you want to follow me, you should deny yourself and carry the cross." Thus, Jesus is teaching us today that greatness does not consist in what we have or in what we can get from others but in what we can give of ourselves to others. This is the path that Jesus wants us to give our vote for in our lives.

This Friday I joined the Bible Study discussion group watching Bishop Barron's talk about how it is to live as a priest, prophet and king in our lives as Christians. He said that in a world gone wrong, there would be no communion without sacrifice.

Sacrifice is needed for us to be healed; sacrifice is needed for us to be reconciled; sacrifice is needed for us to be united. We need to get out of ourselves, of our own prejudices and wants, of our comfort zones and conveniences to attain communion and peace in our lives.

When I was a student, the least favorite subject that I have is Math because it is very challenging for me. It is difficult for me to comprehend those mathematical formulas like: $A=\pi r^2$. Our teacher also makes sure that the problems he gave us are complicated and hard. At times, I felt like complaining. I felt like giving up. It's hard. But my Dad told me that Math is just like life, it is supposed to be hard. It is supposed to challenge me. It is supposed to let me work hard to find the right answer. It is only then that I can be better. It is only then that I can excel in my life. For those of you who work out, you probably know the expression "Go for the burn." This means pushing ourselves to our physical limits. The path to true glory means "going for the burn". James and John probably didn't see the path to glory today as entailing going for the burn in their self-sacrifice, but eventually, they learned the lesson and excelled.

This is what usually happens in our life. The experience of our parents can testify to this. Most of you if not all of you probably didn't know the extent of how it is to be a parent until it came to you and you learned from it. Yes, there are a lot of joys of being a parent but it does come along with many sacrifices. You can think of those sleepless nights taking care of your baby or the numerous hustling of bringing

your children from one sports practice to the next. “N. You’re now an expert of changing diapers, right? Practice makes perfect, right?”

For us children, we are thankful for the sacrifices our parents have given up for us so that we can grow well and can be where we are now. This is what endears our parents to us. We come to love them for what they have done for us. Though they have their own limitations and shortcomings, they try or they have tried their best to make sure that we, their children, are loved and well taken care of. They don’t do these for the sake of fame, glory or money. They do these for a simple reason, their love for their children. This is what Jesus did for us. Out of his love for all of us, he gave up his life so that we can have life in him. Notwithstanding our weaknesses and limitations, Jesus continuously loves us. He continuously takes care of us.

So let us, then, learn from the example of our dear parents, or for those who are parents, from your experience as parents. Let us follow Jesus through a parent-like love for their children. Let us continue to live up our Christian faith by our loving service to others just like Jesus for us. If we find ourselves struggling with giving ourselves up for the service of others, we should try to push ourselves. It is supposed to be hard. It is supposed to be painful. But it is worth it. If ever we come to the point of giving up, let us examine ourselves. We might be falling to the deceiving trap of the Devil. Let us not give in to him. Let us choose the way of Christ in our lives. Let us give Jesus our vote. Amen.