

ORDINARY TIME PREPARATION Cycle A – Part Five

27th Sunday

Background: Jesus the prophet again tells a story to the religious leaders that reminds us all that what matters in the kingdom/reign of God is not just words but actions that embody love. We will be good stewards of the kingdom/reign only by bearing such good fruit.

1. Describe a specific time when you feel that your belief in Jesus, revealed in your actions, made life better for someone.
2. Describe a time when you failed.
3. Which prophetic voice that has called you to be a more loving person have you refused to listen to?
4. When have you found in prayer the “peace of God” which overcomes anxiety?

Practice: We tend to compartmentalize our lives, but the Good News is meant to be revealed at all times and places. Do you live it at work, at home, with your friends, etc.? Which area do you need to be more authentically Christian in?

28th Sunday

Background: Jesus tells another unsettling parable to the religious leaders of his day who refuse his renewed, prophetic call to live now in God’s kingdom/reign. Yet he also has a word of warning for those in any generation who do heed his call. Sharing the banquet of his kingdom/reign requires the right wedding garment, those deeds inspired by love that embody the conversion of our hearts. (The longer version makes the point of the parable much clearer.)

1. What has been your greatest source of happiness in your life as a Christian?
2. When has trying to follow Jesus in all things led you to a place that you did not expect to go?
3. What still makes you hesitate in following Jesus’s call?
4. When has the strength of God been present in your life?

Practice: Find a copy of Merton’s Prayer of Trust and Confidence or of Abandonment, and pray it alone or with others this week. It alludes to today’s Responsorial Psalm.

29th Sunday

Background: Having challenged the chief priests and elders with his stories, the prophet Jesus now addresses the Pharisees and Herodians, both of whom were sincerely trying to recall their fellow-Jews to a more authentic living of the covenant that God had made with their ancestors, a situation complicated by the Romans’ complete domination of

their country. How do we live in the tension between the very real demands of our society and still maintain our allegiance to the God's kingdom/reign?

1. Describe a time when you felt a conflict between expectations and values at work or with family and friends and your relationship with Jesus.
2. Discernment can be a difficult process. Who has been your best adviser as you attempt to discern God's call for you? Why?
3. During the Vietnam War some Catholics enlisted because they believed in the rightness of that cause; others sought status as conscientious objectors. Are you comfortable with that kind of diversity?
4. As Paul says, conviction comes through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. When have you felt empowered by the Spirit in the midst of a real challenge?

Practice: Are you registered to vote? Have you consulted "Faithful Citizenship," the document issued by the American Catholic bishops outlining what is expected of Catholics in our role as citizens of the U.S.?

30th Sunday

Background: For one last time Jesus reminds the devout religious people of his day that life as a Christian is not built on keeping rules and regulations but on a love of God so all-embracing that it includes all human beings made in the divine image and even, as Pope Francis has stated, all of God's creation.

1. Whom do you not want to be your neighbor? Are you disturbed when interacting with a person of a different color, class, creed, sexual orientation, political party, educational background, nationality, age, and so on?
2. An easy trap to fall into is thinking that we should help only those who are "deserving." What limits have you set for those who deserve the support of your time, talent, or treasure?
3. How have you helped someone to feel included at work, in your family, or in your neighborhood?
4. How do you think that Jesus is calling the devout religious people of our day to be more inclusive?

Practice: Big picture activism has its place, but so does grass roots involvement. Where might you make a difference by your involvement in a community council or recycling effort or Girl/Boy Scout troop?