



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
September 3, 2023

The Cost of Discipleship

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

In 1937, *The Cost of Discipleship* by a German Lutheran pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was published. The book reflected on the Sermon on the Mount, and the demands it outlined led to Bonhoeffer’s arrest and eventual death at the hands of the Nazis. It can be very dangerous to be faithful to Jesus’ way of life. This shouldn’t surprise us. Jesus’ teaching cost Jesus his life.

Though the Gospel reading does not provide us with a program of action, it repeats Jesus’ charge to take up our cross and follow him. This cross is different for each of us; it makes very personal

demands. We are called to lose our life for his sake. This was true at the time of Jesus; it is true today.

This was true at the time of the prophet Jeremiah as well. He was called to proclaim God’s word to his own people. They would not listen. Instead, “I am an object of laughter; / everyone mocks me” (Jeremiah 20:7). The prophet wants relief from his prophetic responsibility. Who wouldn’t? What follows is quite moving. He makes up his mind that he will stop talking about God—but he can’t. “It [the word of God] is as if fire is burning in my heart... / I grow weary holding back” (Jeremiah 20:9). That is the cost Jeremiah had to pay. The cross was the cost Jesus paid. And what of us? †

A Word from Pope Francis

Let us make sure that the cross hanging on the wall at home, or that little one that we wear around our neck, is a sign of our wish to be united with Christ in lovingly serving our brothers and sisters, especially the littlest and most fragile. The cross is the holy sign of God’s Love.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 30, 2020



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 20:7-9

All day long I am an object of laughter; / everyone mocks me.

Romans 12:1-2

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God.

Matthew 16:21-27

[Jesus said,] “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

The cross every person has to take up is different for each one of us.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What is the cost of discipleship for you?
- What in your life might be the cross you are being asked to bear?

A Balanced Perspective

Kathleen Basi

We live in a world where science reveals wonders as distant as the far reaches of the universe and as intimate as the center of our own DNA. We prize knowledge and revere those who help us reach greater understanding of the world and ourselves.

It's good to seek wisdom, but focusing too much on intellect makes it easy to get jaded about the things that defy scientific testing. We think we should be able to pull apart the strands of the universe and reduce everything to its components. When we can't, we start worrying that we're being "taken for a ride."

Yet mystery surrounds us. For instance, after decades of research, scientists still uncover new components to human breast milk. In every age, humans have looked to the night sky with wonder and awe, marveling at the size of the universe and our own tiny place within it. And who contemplates



the death of a child without asking, *Why?*

Mystery is part of the human experience. It can inspire awe; it can deepen grief; it can challenge our faith. As we long to understand the earth, so we long to understand the One who made us. Yet some things will always remain unfathomable. The tension between these two opposing realities will not be resolved on this side of eternity.

The deeper we dig, the more we will understand about God. Yet the more we understand, the more layers of mystery are revealed.

Frustrating, as it may seem, that's a good thing. Greater understanding allows us to exercise control over our surroundings. Yet the more control we impose, the easier it is to forget that every breath is a gift from God. Contemplating all that cannot be understood offers a much-needed balancing perspective—namely, that there is a bright center of the universe, and *I am not it*.

As hard as it may be, living the faith means accepting—even embracing the reality that not all things can be known and understood. At least, not right now. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke said it beautifully, in his *Letters to a Young Poet*, when he spoke of being patient toward the unknown, embracing the questions within, and living in the moment to uncover the answers. †

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Living Our Passages Well

Death is a passage to new life. That sounds very beautiful, but few of us desire to make this passage. It might be helpful to realize that our final passage is preceded by many earlier passages. When we are born, we make a passage from life in the womb to life in the family. When we go to school, we make a passage from life in the family to life in the larger community. When we get married, we make a passage from a life with many options to a life committed to one person. When we retire, we make a passage from a life of clearly defined work to a life asking for new creativity and wisdom. Each of these passages is a death leading to new life. When we live these passages well, we are becoming more prepared for our final passage.

Fr. Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, IMOH



Gracious God, as we celebrate Labor Day, we pray, encourage us in our work, calm us in our rest, and inspire us in our prayer. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 4–9

Monday, Weekday:

1 Thes 4:13–18 / Lk 4:16–30

Tuesday, Weekday:

1 Thes 5:1–6, 9–11 / Lk 4:31–37

Wednesday, Weekday:

Col 1:1–8 / Lk 4:38–44

Thursday, Weekday: Col 1:9–14 / Lk 5:1–11


Friday, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Mi 5:1–4a or Rom 8:28–30 /

Mt 1:1–16, 18–23 or 1:18–23

Saturday, St. Peter Claver:

Col 1:21–23 / Lk 6:1–5

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