

# OCTOBER 1, 2023: 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



On Tuesday I stopped by Christine Trznadel's office to see if she needed anything from me. She asked me, "Did you send your bulletin article to Betty?" I responded "Yes" and told her that I sent all of my articles for September on the first Monday of the month, and that I plan on doing likewise going forward. I then realized that Sunday was October 1 and would not fit into my plan. At this point Courtney Callanan had come into the office and overheard our conversation. She said "I think there is a flaw in your plan." I looked at Christine, who gave me a nod, and then told her that I would write it later today and get it to Betty. She smiled and thanked me.

Let's be honest: this kind of thing has probably happened to you more than once in your life. You had an issue, concern, problem, event, job, or whatever you had to do, and you needed to figure out the best way to manage the situation. You weighed the pros and cons of what you should or should not do. Then, sometimes slowly or sometimes quickly, you put your plan together. At this point you are pretty certain that your plan is bulletproof and ready to be put into action. But then something happens and you recognize a flaw in your plan. Sometimes you can easily adjust your plan, but other times you have to go back to the drawing board and come up with a new plan.

We can often run into this problem in our faith life. We see an issue dealing with our faith that needs to be addressed, and so we try to determine the best way to handle it. We look at the issue usually from multiple angles and then lay out our plan. But this is when you need to remember the old adage, "man plans and God laughs." The problem is that many times we believe we have all the information we need and can see the big picture, but we are almost always wrong where that is concerned. There is only One who sees the full picture and has all the information, and that's God. WE have only a glimpse of the picture and only part of the information we need to make the best decision.

This happens because of how most of us deal with life in general. As I preached the other day, we have a tendency to compartmentalize our lives; we put our choices and issues into little boxes. One side of our life is for God to have a say, and the other side is for us to take care of. The truth of the matter is that our side is usually bigger than God's, having more of the boxes.

Once we make this split in our lives—that there are questions of faith, and then other things—we have created a plan that is doomed to failure. It is a plan that is patently unchristian and irreparably flawed. This splitting up of our life is the way of sin. It is a complete contradiction of how Jesus lived his life. And anything that contradicts Christ is, by definition, a falsehood.

How *did* Christ live his life? He approached life as a unified whole. All his decisions were determined by faith. His faith is what led Him to do everything that He did. When He was found in the Temple by his parents, He was clear that He was doing the work of his Father. He faced the devil down in the desert through his faith. He was baptized by John because He knew it was the will of his Father. He chose his Apostles through prayer. When He was asked to remain in a particular place, He said no: He was sent to bring his message to others also and so He needed to move on. He did not want to die on the cross, but He accepted it because it was the will of the Father. By his powerful words "not my will but your will," He tells us all we need to know about how to make our choices and develop our plans.

In order to have a true Christian life, we must be ready to live the life of Christ. It is a life of humility, obedience, self-emptying, and dying to self—a life of true sacrifice. It is a life that is not centered in ourselves, but in others. It is a life of unconditional love. It is the life that Saint Paul mapped out for us when he defined love to the Corinthians: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

At some level, we generally make our plans according to how it will benefit us. But the way of Christ, the way of the cross, the way of love looks to one truth and one reality only. There is only one question that a Christian can ask and thereby *not* fall into sin: "God, what do you want me to do?" or "God, what is your plan for me?"

God has given us the same tools that Jesus had to discern the answers to these questions. Jesus used the scriptures, prayer, and his community of faith. Now, we need to ask ourselves, "Will I continue to split my life up into boxes, or will I follow the way of Christ?"

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to call me at (978) 254-0560. If you prefer to email, please visit <https://theholyrood.org/email-fr-brian>.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian".

Fr. Brian