

Breaking Open the Word: In the Spirit's Wisdom 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time: 4 September 2022

READING AND FAITH SHARING FOR THE DAY:

Each of the Readings can be read or simply the Gospel. 1st Reading: Wisdom 9:13-18b; 2nd Reading: Philemon 9-10, 12-17. Today's Gospel is a selection from Luke 14:25-33. WHILE SOMEONE READS THE SCRIPTURE(S), LISTEN WELL. BE AWARE OF THE IMAGE BEING PAINTED, OR THE STORY BEING TOLD. DOES THE STORY OR THE IMAGE CALL TO MIND ANYTHING SIMILAR IN YOUR OWN LIFE OR EXPERIENCE?

After the reading, share your impressions of the reading(s) with each other. Then jump to this:

- ✓ *When have you found yourself under the thumb of another person needing to find a change?*
- ✓ *Twelve steppers: What brought you to address the addiction that was binding you?*
- ✓ *How many attempts did you make to find your way out of the other's control or to name and address the addiction?*

Paul, in the 2nd Reading is sending an escaped slave back to his "master" to confront the civil law with a call to Mercy in Christ. Philemon, the master, had the right by the law to execute Onesimus without "trial" because he escaped bondage. Paul is putting his "bond of brotherhood" and friendship on the shoulders of Onesimus: **I am sending him [Onesimus], that is, my own heart, back to you [Philemon].** Paul continues: **IF YOU REGARD ME AS A PARTNER, WELCOME [Onesimus] AS YOU WOULD ME.** That is a mouthful to say, to "read" and to walk into the jaws of – **All in Faith! WELCOME [Onesimus] AS YOU WOULD ME.**

- ✓ *When have you had the courage to speak truth to power in this way? Could you? At what cost?*
- ✓ *When have you had the confidence to walk into the jaws of judgement with hope of mercy?*
- ✓ *When have you been challenged in Love to be the "merciful one" and "letting it go?"*

Where did Paul come up with this idea of seeking forgiveness/mercy in the name of Christ and the bond of oneness in Christ? Paul came to realize that we are each called out in the Love (*who is Christ*) to be that Love (*because in Baptism we are christs [anointed]*) for and with each other – even to the point of radical forgiveness.

The text of the 1st Reading from the Book of Wisdom offers us that question: **scarce do we guess the things on earth, and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty. Who ever knew your counsel?** Then the author offers us a clarification: **except YOU HAD GIVEN WISDOM AND SENT YOUR HOLY SPIRIT FROM ON HIGH?**

St. Theresa of Kolkata offers us this insight: **"The fruit of Silence is Prayer. The fruit of Prayer is Faith. the fruit of Faith is Love. The fruit of Love is Service. The fruit of Service is Peace."** And we might add: **The fruit of Peace is Balance!**

Time for role play!! Reread the text from Paul to Philemon – three times.

1st be Paul, writing the letter:

- ✓ *From what you know from the writings of Paul, how did he get from being complicit in the stoning of St. Steven to being the proponent of fraternal equity among the Baptized?*
- ✓ *What actual confidence would you have, that Philemon will indeed love Onesimus to life? to spare his life? accepting him as Paul himself?*

2nd be Onesimus given the letter to take to Philemon, your "master," now "brother."

- ✓ *How many times did you stop on the way "home" to rethink what you were doing?*
- ✓ *To what depth and under/standing of Faith and Peace did Paul bring Onesimus to be free enough to facing potential execution with the hope of being forgiven and accepted by Philemon?*

3rd be Philemon, seeing your despicable escaped slave showing up with a letter of “safe passage.”

- ✓ *Are you up to taking a “slave” and accepting him as a brother/sister? What would it take to get there?*
- ✓ *Transforming the tradition of “It is my right under the Law to…” do whatever, to “He is now your brother, accept him as you would me!” is a huge step. What parallels do you perceive in our current societal morés?*

The last sentence of today’s Gospel from Luke calls for a different mental orientation to “renouncing possessions” than we are used to:

anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.

- ✓ *How might “renouncing possessions” impact your interpersonal relationships?*
- ✓ *When have you felt “possessed” or “controlled” by someone? How did/do you handle this?*
- ✓ *Who in our societies are considered/labeled as “less than” the “acceptable” people?*
- ✓ *When have you felt belittled or “left out” because of status, ethnicity, education level, wallet contents, racial group, Religion, etc.?*
- ✓ *How can you dispossess such attitudes, being transformed to accept the “outsiders” as peers?*

Intentions for the World in Which We Live!

For the Church: Creator, open our hearts to being vigilant to guard your graciousness as the center of our life.

For the gift of Wisdom: Spirit of the Living God enlighten our minds. Inspire us in making loving and life-giving decisions each day.

For courage: Creator, strengthen us as we encounter our daily crosses. May we give witness to Christ through living the paschal mystery and embracing our new life in Christ.

For freedom of Spirit: Creator unbind us from past hurts and failures. May we be free to love, serve and promote healthy relationships.

For a deeper connection with all the people who are in our life: that we may see them with the love that God has for each of them and encourage them to live their life fully.

For people without food: Creator, touch the hearts of people with abundance to share resources so that all may experience your bounty.

For people held in slavery or human trafficking: Creator, break their bonds. Inspire us to help heal them. Establish for them life giving relationships.

For refugees and people fleeing violence, particularly children: Creator open the hearts of people to recognize immigrants as sisters and brothers. Inspire us to provide places of safety and be welcomed into communities of faith.