



23RD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, YEAR 9/7/2025

THEME: WHAT SHALL I GIVE UP?

Dear Beloved Parishioners,

Today's Gospel puts in the starkest terms what is required of those who want to be disciples of Jesus in any generation, and ***all the time***.

I admit, I have sometimes "hated" one or another of my siblings, my parents and "even [my] own life." That was usually because they (brothers, sisters, Mom and Pop) were "mean" to me, or in a moment when I wasn't happy to be me ("hate his own life").

But *that* "hate" is far from what Jesus means as he speaks to "the crowds" who were traveling with him to Jerusalem. Jesus is destined to *die* in Jerusalem: that's why he's making this last trip there. And he's warning those followers (*us*) about the "cost" of being his disciple. The earliest Christians had seen, some of them with their own eyes, the cost to Jesus of taking that path: ***everything***. And they heard in these words of Jesus a warning that if they/we follow the path to the end, it will mean that they/we will be handing over everything (even family members, even the all-important \$tuff they/we live on, even their/our most firmly-held opinions, even their/our *bodies*, for God's sake!).

What is Jesus communicating to us in these stark words, and in the pair of parables (about building a tower, about waging war) in today's Gospel? **Be prepared!** This trip to Jerusalem seems like every trip we've made to a *place*. But to Jesus, this is the final scene of his life, the act by which he hands over to his Father everything he has received from God: life, love, human hopes, fears, joys, \$tuff: *all* of it. *Be prepared! Don't be afraid—but don't be caught by surprise, either.*

What will we find most difficult to let go of at the end of our lives? Some of us are already losing our hearing, mobility, independence. Are these losses "things" we will eventually no longer need—and losing them gradually, year by year, is just a process of "paring down" so that we won't have such a big loss when we die? Can we find peace in the faith that the journey to *our* "Jerusalem" is the path to freedom, and fullness of life—as it was for Jesus?

I'm glad to be on this journey in your company. Let us encourage one another on the way.

God bless our Parish, and God bless you.

Msgr. Mike (while Fr. Albert is away)