

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the pastor, to the other priest and deacons in the parish, and to the person who produces the bulletin.

Bulletin Bites

July 2, 2017

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 10:37-42

Option 1

“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.”

Jesus was caring, kind and loving. But he was not subtle. He spoke bluntly about his mission and message to the people of his day and to all who would come to believe in him. He clearly stated the conditions to be his disciple and the consequences for those who did not accept those conditions. That caused many people to choose not to follow him. He did not chase after them and beg them to stay or offer them an easier path. We do not know their names. Those who chose to remain as disciples of Jesus would eventually learn and understand the consequences of their decision. They followed Jesus because they had faith in him; because he told them about a loving God; because he demonstrated that love to them; because he was unequivocal and honest. We know the names of many of them. There are streets, cities, churches and children named after them. That is not why they risked all to follow Jesus. They were happy to live another day to tell others about Jesus. But that is why they are remembered, loved and honored.

Option 2

“And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink

because the little one is a disciple; amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”

In contrast to the harsh sounding statements about those who do not leave father and mother, sister and brother, to be his follower and friend, Jesus offers a simple act to be his disciple - give a child a cup of cold water. Attachment to anything or any one that prevents us from choosing the will of God; from loving others as Jesus loves us; from doing simple acts of kindness; and from accepting the consequences of imitating Him. Jesus frequently taught that being his follower is not complicated, but it is not be easy. The challenge is to not prefer anything to loving like Jesus and teaching others by word and example to do likewise. Certainly we are to love our father and mother, brother and sister, spouse and children, and neighbor, as we love ourselves. Love frees us to do what is right and good for ourselves. Attachments make us slaves to the demands of the person or thing that we cannot do without. Paraphrasing G. K. Chesterton, “The things we cannot do without we do not possess, they possess us.”

July 9, 2017
Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mt 11:25-30

Option 1

**“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . .
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”**

Jesus spoke those words to his disciples before he was cruelly betrayed, forcefully arrested, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, viciously beaten and brutally crucified. After that occurred his disciples would have justifiably wondered: Is the yoke of Jesus was easy and his burden light?” If the mission of Jesus had ended with his death that would have been a reasonable question. But Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples. They recalled that he also said, “For I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest in me.” Aware that all we have, all we are, and all we will be comes from our loving God, such humility of heart and the knowledge that we will rest in the Risen Lord makes his yoke easy and his burden light. After his Resurrection Jesus’ disciples understood what he meant. His yoke was to choose to do the will of his Father. His burden was to fulfill the mission of his human nature, regardless of the cost. Do we understand? Are we willing to accept his yoke and burden?

Option 2

**“ . . . for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned
you have revealed them to the little ones”**

The deacon explained to a group of seven year old’s preparing for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist that God sent them into the world with a unique array of talents, abilities and gifts that God wanted them to spend a lifetime to discover, accept, develop and use to the best of their ability for their own benefit and for the benefit of others. He asked the class “What would the world be like if everyone was using all of their talents, abilities and gifts to the best of their ability for themselves and others; accepting the benefit of the gifts others had to offer; everyone happy with their own gifts and happy for others who had different gifts. One little seven year old girl in the front row quickly raised her hand and said, “Oh, deacon, that would be heaven!” The little girl reminds us that intelligence and knowledge are not a guarantee of wisdom and that the learned sometimes outsmart themselves, while the “little ones” can be very wise.

July 16, 2017
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mt 13:1-23

Option 1

**“The one who hears the Word and understand it . . .
Beards fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirty fold.”**

The people who heard Jesus tell the parable of the sower would have understood: seeds that fall on fertile ground would have a better chance of producing better than seeds that land on a path or rocky ground. Jesus was aware that they may not have understood the deeper spiritual and philosophical meaning of the story. Recalling the words of Jeremiah [5:21] “You foolish and senseless people, who have eyes and do not see, who have ears and do not hear” and quoting

Isaiah [6:9] Jesus said, “Whoever has ears ought to hear.” When the others departed the disciples asked Jesus to explain to them the meaning of the story. He reveals that the seed represents the Word he has come to proclaim and live. Some will hear the Word but loose interest; some will they will abandon it or they will find it challenging and abandon it; but some will hear the Word and accept it and live it regardless of the difficulties and risk. The disciples understood and produced “a hundred or sixty or thirty fold.” Do we understand? How much are we producing?

Option 2

**“Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears,
they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears
and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them.”**

Jesus is quoting to the people a passage from Isaiah [6:10] in which God is lamenting the hardness of the hearts of the people, despite all the good He has done for them. Jesus had healed the sick and the lame, restored sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, raised the dead, and taught them by word and example to love God and to love their neighbor as themselves. They marveled at the wonders he had done, but they wondered about that *love your neighbor* thing. They were intrigued when Jesus did things for people who were complete strangers to him without seeking or accepting a reward from them. But they did not seem to grasp that he expected them to do for others, neighbors and enemies alike, what he had done for them and to use all that God had given to them for themselves and for *others*. The people in the time of Jesus were apparently no different than the people in the time of Isaiah. Are we any different today? We are supposed to be. The Good News compels us to get to know and imitate Jesus.

July 23, 2017

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mt 13:24-43

Option 1

**“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.”**

In today’s Gospel passage we hear Jesus use parables to compare the kingdom of God, two about seeds and one that compares yeast mixed with flour. The messages in the parables can be expressed in more modern maxims: “Bloom where you are planted” Be the person God created you to be, despite the challenges in the world around you that try to distract and discourage you. “It is not how much you give, it is why you give it” Giving what you can to the common good is important, no matter how small you think it may be. “It is not the size of the dog in the fight that counts, it is the size of the fight in the dog.” Determination and tenacity in the pursuit of what is right and good will win against any challenge, no matter how great. The people listening to Jesus faced the same challenges and concerns that we face today. Jesus used parables to teach and encourage his disciples, and us, to bloom, to grow, to increase and improve the world in which we live.

Option 2

“If you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them.

Let them grow together until the harvest.”

Jesus knew his followers would live in a world that is full of temptations - to do evil, to take the easy way out, to take advantage of others to gain wealth and power. He knew we would be challenged to abandon our efforts to know Him and to imitate Him to the best of our ability. Jesus also knew that one of God's greatest gifts to us is free will - the ability to choose between good and evil, to choose between doing right and doing wrong, to choose between being generous and being selfish. But Jesus taught us by word and deed that being his follower - a Christian - is not about feeling good, it is about doing good. It is not about looking right; it is about doing right. It is not about how much we acquire for ourselves, it is about how much we share with others. God creates us in this world with many temptations so we could demonstrate our love for him by seeking to discern His will and choosing to do His will. Our God is an awesome God!

July 30, 2017

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mt 13:44-52

Option 1

“Do you understand all these things?”

Jesus spoke Aramaic. The Torah was written in Hebrew, developed from Aramaic. Writing as the work of the “scribes” and few others, including Pharisees and Sadducees, could read and write. It is unlikely that Jesus or his disciples could read and write. Jesus taught in parables with images from his world that his followers they could understand and remember. They returned to their homes and retold the stories and passed on the message to their family and friends as they sat around their fires and cooking pots. They did not have TV's, cell phones, computers, etc to distract them. The people who heard Jesus teach that the kingdom is like a treasure buried in a field or a full net from which the fisherman saves the good and discards the bad fish, received that message with great joy. It gave them hope that they could attain the Kingdom of God by keeping God's Commandments. Do we hear that message? Do we understand that message? Do we share their hope? Do we act accordingly?

Option 2

“The kingdom of God is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

What treasure would we go sell all of our possessions to buy? It would seem that such a treasure would have to be more valuable than all of our current possessions. What treasure could possibly be worth more than billions of dollars? It is something we all want. It is something we all can have. It is something that will last forever. It is eternal life in an intimate relationship with the Almighty and Eternal God who created us. That is the Greatest Treasure. Jesus has already secured it for us. We must be careful not to lose it. If we are aware that everything we have comes from and belongs to God, and He wants us to use it for our own benefit and enjoyment, but not get so attached to anything that we cannot let it go or use it for the benefit and enjoyment of others, we will gain the Greatest Treasure. Do we want it? What are we doing to make sure we don't lose it?