

# The 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time — Sept 15, 2019

As we prepare to enter into our Small Groups once again, I want to encourage you to make it a very special time for yourself, and for each other, by using the materials in the book to be genuinely reflective and to let the Lord speak to you. I pray that the opportunity provides for you an experience of personal growth in your relationship with Jesus. Just becoming more aware of how powerful and effective He chooses to be in our lives through the power of His Spirit, if we just let Him.

“Walking the Disciple’s Path” is a wonderful tool if we choose to use it wisely, not so much for discussion of whether we agree with this or that ..... but rather through the sense of ‘what is Jesus trying to teach me through this session ..... this chapter .... this reflection’? It is really only in this way that we will experience the power and wonder of the Holy Spirit moving in our hearts and in our being.

The Christian journey is an invitation to know the person — Jesus Christ is the Person. Knowing the facts, stories, and experiences, are not unimportant; but they are not what He desires for us ..... He desires for us to know Him, not from a distance ..... but real up-close. An ‘Intimate Relationship’ is probably the term most commonly used.

Linda Rooney, in the introduction to this book, does a great job of outlining her experience of growing up Catholic, with all of the experiences and rituals, and devotions, and practices ..... and says all of these have been a powerful influence and challenge in leading her to this relationship with Him which she now enjoys. I think the very same is true for each of us .... we have a very rich teaching, tradition, and practice, and it is all designed that, as our great old Catechism definition gave us : “We should know, love, and serve Him here on Earth, and be happy with Him for ever in Heaven” ..... Remember that ? Still profoundly true !!!!!

So, the real question is: Do I Know Him? ..... The One True God and Jesus Christ whom I Claim as Lord and Savior? This is the question I have got to wrestle with ..... this has got to be the core question of the Christian’s very life !

As we look at the three parables in the Gospel today, we get a very powerful insight into what it means to have this relationship with Jesus Our Savior. Each of the three stories are about being lost or something in our lives being lost ! The story of the Good Shepherd, going in search of the one lost sheep may sound awfully strange to us initially. Jesus asks the question ..... Which one of you would not leave the 99 and go in search of the one? The answer is — none of us .... we would put the word out among our fellow shepherds and say, I am missing one! Please keep an eye out for them.

Jesus is clear and adamant about the fact — “I would go in search of the one ..... and search until I have found him/her. I would ..... Now, we will never understand that in a meaningful way until I am that lost one. If I am the lost one and come to experience His Mercy, His Forgiveness, then and only then, am I going to come to know and appreciate the real meaning of this parable. The real meaning of what it means to be Loved by My Father.

The second parable sounds simple enough in its substance. However, many scripture scholars say this story is much more complex. It is much more challenging than just losing a coin. They propose that it was likely her dowry ..... it was not unusual for a woman to wear her dowry in a hat on her head, and the coins were affixed in the headwear. For her to lose one of those coins was a threat to the proposed marriage. So the relentless search and subsequent finding are a source of immense joy. The Wedding is on again ..... my life is saved, turned around!

The story of the two sons and their understanding Father has got to be one of the greatest in the New Testament. The fear is that we have heard this story so often, we could so easily sit back and say ‘Oh yea, I know that one, and I understand it completely.’ This is one of the parables that we could reduce so easily to simplistic responses. We might say, as many do, ‘that young man just needed a good ole fashion whupping’ ..... and we might say that other boy could also do with a good hiding. We have got to know that such an approach really doesn’t take us very far. It’s a story about the Father’s Mercy, and Endless Forgiveness, and how He desires through such Forgiveness to draw all of His sons and daughters to Himself. He extends the same love, and mercy, and forgiveness, to the son who has squandered the inheritance, and the one who had remained at home and apparently done the right things (maybe on his own power). Neither son really reflects a keen awareness of how loved they are by their father ..... this is the real heart of the story.

It is easy for us to sit back and say, well I am not that son who squandered, or the one who stayed at home. What if I am both of those Sons ..... the one who has sometimes squandered, and also the son who has stayed home and done right ????. Why not reflect on that question during the week and ask myself, “Am I truly aware of how much my Father loves me?”

Our book study provides a beautiful insight on this!

— Fr. Gerry Hurley