

**Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time “C” Cycle September 3-4, 2016**

**In 1937, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor and the most prominent Protestant theologian in Germany, wrote a book titled *The Cost of Discipleship*. The book is a commentary on Jesus’ teachings we hear in today’s Gospel.**

**Shortly afterward Bonhoeffer was arrested and executed for publicly opposing Adolf Hitler and the Nazis for their anti-Christian and barbaric policies. He is a powerful example of being willing to pay the cost, the high cost of his life, for being a committed disciple of Jesus Christ.**

**Today’s Gospel, from St. Luke, gives Jesus’ challenging teaching on what it takes and costs to being his serious disciple. It consists of three challenging, hard, even harsh sayings and two illustrating parables.**

**The first hard saying: “if anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” The word “hate” is harsh, to be understood as hyperbole or exaggeration. Nonetheless it does highlight the importance of placing God and Jesus as a priority over everything else, including one’s own life.**

**This teaching should not be mistaken as a reason for renouncing one’s family responsibilities, which Jesus makes clear in other parts of the Gospel. Being disciple of Jesus calls for a reordering of one’s values and priorities so that Jesus is one’s first love before everyone and everything else.**

**The second challenging teaching in the Gospel is: “whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” As we well know, any worthwhile pursuit in life requires discipline and self-sacrifice before we can attain its rewards. So it is with being a disciple of Jesus.**

**Each of us has our own crosses. Some of them we don’t choose such as illness, disappointments, financial stresses, etc. Other crosses come with striving to live a good moral Christian life, being faithful to the commitments of our state in life, to our spouses, children, parents, and others.**

**The third radical saying of Jesus in the Gospel is to renounce all our possessions. The point is not that possessions are evil, for we all need and deserve basic necessities and even some luxuries. Sometimes, however, we spend so much time and energy in acquiring, keeping, and maintaining what we have, that there is a danger that what we have can own, possess, and dominate us.**

**Taking all of these teachings of Jesus seriously can overwhelm us. We can't implement them on our own, but only with the Lord's grace. Most of us can only do this one small step at a time. The effort is worth it because the reward is God's love now and for all eternity.**

**Besides Dietrich Bonhoeffer, there have been many other committed disciples of Jesus. One stands out today, as Mother Teresa of Calcutta is recognized, canonized a saint. Found written on a wall in her convent is the following creed of a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ in response to criticisms she and her sisters endured:**

**People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.**

**If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.**

**If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.**

**If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.**

**What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.**

**If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.**

**The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.**

**Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.**

**In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.**