

## HOMILY ~ 23rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY SEPTEMBER 3/4, 2022

Here is a blast from the past. How many people remember Bubba Smith? He was a Michigan State University All-American defensive end who went on to play nine years in the pros. After football, he was recruited to appear with Dick Butkus in commercials for Miller Light. Part of the Miller Light commercials was the chant "*tastes great, less filling.*" The commercials became very popular, and Bubba Smith noticed that any time he appeared in public he would hear the slogan "*tastes great, less filling.*" He did not think too much of it at first, but soon he started wondering what he was doing. He never drank much himself, and he did not like the negative affect that alcohol can have on people's lives. He did not want to be remembered for promoting alcohol, that is not who he wanted to become, so he quit making the ads. Now our culture would tell us he made a brilliant move. Previously, he was famous with sports fans. Now he was famous with everyone who watched TV. He enjoyed making the commercials. They were a lot of fun, and he made a lot of money. But he decided there were things that were more important than fame and fortune.

The Gospel Reading today is all about deciding who you want to become and how you plan to get there. What do you think? If you wanted to build a tower, you would make sure you could get enough money to complete it before you start. If you wanted to go to war, you would make sure you had enough soldiers before you start. What do you want to become? Do you want to become a disciple of Jesus Christ so you can get to heaven? How can you get there? Jesus gives us some direction in the Gospel Reading today.

Jesus tells us that we must hate our family to become his disciples. I think in the translation hate is too strong of a word. It would be more identifying the negative influences that our family can have in our lives and not allowing ourselves to be negatively affected by it. At the time the Gospel was written, whole families were not always becoming Christian at the same time. Jesus was telling people that they may have to differ with their families to become Christian, whatever that meant in their situation. Actually if you put Jesus first in your life, you will probably treat your family much better. Maybe you would figure out how to forgive your brother. Maybe you

would overlook some of the annoying habits of your mother-in-law and just love her. Maybe you would ignore your father less and help him more.

Jesus tells us if we cannot carry our cross and follow him, we cannot be his disciple. Some of the crosses we need to carry are big things out of our control, and we need to carry those; but some are small things that we can choose to do that are difficult to keep doing over a period of time. These can be difficult crosses to carry. Visiting a relative that is home bound may not be necessary or much fun, but it is important to that individual. Sticking by someone when they are going through a difficult time and not much fun to be around can be hard, but important. Consistently supporting a cause even when it is not particularly popular is difficult, but important.

Jesus also tells us that if we do not renounce all of our possessions, we cannot be his disciple. This involves not being overly attached to money or material possessions, and maybe giving them away to someone who needs them more than we do. What are some of the other “possessions” we need to give up? Maybe it means giving up power, authority and control over others and serving them instead. Maybe it means giving up being judgmental and loving others more? Maybe it means giving up some of your strongly held opinions that are creating divisions with others? Sometimes we do not want to be wrong more than we want to be right. Have you held on to a position or opinion too long, even when you know it is not right, just because you do not want to admit that you were wrong? What do you need to give up?

So, what do you want to become, and how are you going to get there? Do you want to become a disciple of Jesus Christ so you can get to heaven? We need to prayerfully look at our lives every day to see if we are headed in the right direction. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not always easy. Sometimes what we need to do is in conflict with our cultural values. As Bubba Smith concluded, there are things that are more important than fame and fortune.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim