

A Gospel with several 'hard sayings' (Matthew 10:37-42)

This Gospel has two sections. The first contains a number of miscellaneous sayings by Jesus concerning the cost of discipleship. The second relates to the authority of the Apostles and the fate of those who welcome them.

In the first section, Jesus offers a number of what are sometimes called 'hard sayings':

- ♦ He who loves another more than Jesus is not worthy to be his disciple.
- ♦ He who fails to embrace the Cross is not worthy to be his disciple.
- ♦ He who seeks self-fulfillment more than self-surrender to Christ is not worthy of him.

In these "hard sayings," Jesus is conveying to us that our commitment to him must supersede all other commitments and relationships, even those as binding and as precious as the relationship between a parent and a child. The Gospel does not advocate abandonment of familial ties and responsibilities, but places the commitment to Christ above all. The reality is, of course, if one is truly a committed disciple of Christ, he/she becomes more capable of loving family members and all others with a selfless love. The third "hard saying" reminds us that if we are only out to satisfy ourselves, we will in the end be losers. On the other hand, if we seek to give of ourselves, we become our best selves and most pleasing to God.

The second part of today's Gospel calls us to be hospitable to those who carry the message of Christ to us. In welcoming the messengers of the Gospel, we are welcoming Christ himself. The gift of even a cup of water to little ones will not go unrewarded.

Reflection Questions

1. As you read the so called 'hard sayings' in today's Gospel, which of them might you find hardest to embrace? Did you find the commentary on the Gospel helpful as you think about the hard sayings?
2. In the second part of the Gospel, Jesus speaks about hospitality. Would you consider yourself hospitable, friendly person in church, or do you tend to be the type of person who minds his/her own business?
3. Do you believe hospitality is a Gospel virtue?

These and so many issues are uppermost in our minds and deserve the prayers of our hearts. Starting Sunday, July 5, and every Sunday at 7:00pm, our parish community will resume praying the Rosary together virtually. Each week, the intentions of the Mysteries will focus on a need relevant to us and our global community today. I hope you will join me in prayer. See page 6 of the Bulletin for more information.

And in a similar way, beginning Wednesday, July 15, at 7:00pm, we will be offering a Small Christian Community via zoom. Led by a team of skilled facilitators, we will proclaim the Sunday readings, read the commentaries I have written for further understanding, and reflect on God's Word and its impact on our lives in this moment. We will virtually break into small groups to discuss and share our faith and then conclude together in prayer. I'm looking forward to this opportunity to drop in and visit with you. See page 6 for more information.

A Cup of Water

The following reflection is by Fr. Flor McCarthy.

In Ireland when we want to welcome a person we say, "Will you have a cup of tea?" How often we have said that to others, and how often others have said it to us. In itself, a cup of tea is a small thing. Yet it can make a person feel welcome.

This shows the importance of small deeds. Small deeds may not look much, but they create a friendly atmosphere. Small flowers give off little scent on their own. But put a bunch of them together, and they can fill a room with fragrance. The dawn chorus results from the singing of many little birds.

Jesus says that anyone who gives one of his disciples even a cup of cold water will be rewarded. Again, a cup of cold water isn't much. It is the biblical equivalent of our cup of tea. To give a cup of cold water is about the smallest thing we could do for another person. Yet in the desert it could be the difference between life and death. Which shows that a deed doesn't have to be big in order to mean a lot. Small deeds and small gifts are very important. Circumstances can magnify the effect of a small deed.

It's not how much we do that matters, but how much love we put into what we do. The spirit in which a deed is done, the person to whom it is done, and the circumstances, can magnify a small deed.

A small deed can bring great comfort to a person provided it has a certain quality. That quality is warmth. All deeds that come from the heart have that quality.

Few of us are given the chance to perform great deeds. But the chance to give 'a cup of water' can come our way several times in the course of a day. The 'cup of cold water' is a symbol of the small kind deed. Little deeds may not look much, but they can bring peace.

Small gestures can tell us more about a person's character than big gestures. Big gestures show us a person's power. Small gestures show us a person's humanity.

Giving is at the heart of the Gospel. It is of the very essence of Christianity. It is through giving that the heart remains open and one becomes a loving person.

Story

The following story shows how important a small deed can be. The Irish writer, Oscar Wilde, made a reputation for himself as a fine writer, and was regarded as a celebrity as well. But then he was sent to prison (for having a sexual relationship with a young man). It was a terrible humiliation for him.

As he was being brought by two policemen from prison to court, a noisy, hostile crowd had gathered. But then a friend of his appeared, who made a simple gesture of friendship and respect that silenced the crowd. As Wilde passed by, handcuffed and with bowed head, this man raised his hat to him. It was a very small thing, yet it meant a great deal to Wilde at the time.

Reflecting on that simple gesture Wilde later wrote: "Men have gone to heaven for smaller things than that. I do not know to the present moment whether my friend is aware that I was even conscious of his action. It is not a thing for which one can render formal thanks in formal words. I store it in the treasure house of my heart. I keep it there as a secret debt that I can never possibly repay.

[Used with permission granted by Dominican Publications, www.dominicanpublications.com. *New Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies*, by Flor McCarthy.]

When Feeling Spiritually Dry

*Dear Lord, in the midst of much inner turmoil
and restlessness, there is a consoling thought:
maybe you are working in me in a way
I cannot yet feel, experience or understand.
My mind is not able to concentrate on you;*

*my heart is not able to remain centered,
and it seems as if you are absent
and have left me alone.*

But in faith I cling to you.

*I believe that your Spirit reaches deeper
and further than my mind or heart,
and that profound movements
are not the first to be noticed.*

*Therefore, Lord, I promise I will not run away,
not give up, not stop praying,
even when it all seems useless, pointless,
and a waste of time and effort.*

*I want to let you know that I love you
even though I do not feel loved by you,
and that I hope in you even though
I often experience despair;
let this be a little dying I can do with you
and for you as a way of experiencing
some solidarity with the millions in this world
who suffer far more than I do. Amen.*

Fr. Henri Nouwen

The following is a beautiful night prayer.

With Jesus in the Night

God, good night.

Thank you for the day.

The good bits were good.

The tough bits are over for another day.

Help me to sleep well tonight.

Help me to face into another day tomorrow.

Bless and protect all my loved ones this night.

Bless and protect all those, too, with whom

*I disagree or with whom I don't get on—
they're your children too, I know.*

*May tomorrow bring about your will for the
world—peace, love, joy and mercy.*

May I play my part. For now, good night, God.

I love you and know you love me, warts and all.

(Sacred Heart Messenger, August 2020)

Have a blessed week,

fr. Sean

tobin2@live.com