



Things to Ponder

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23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Luke 14:25-33

Dear Friends and Visitors,

On this Labor Day Weekend, we give thanks for the opportunities we enjoy in this country to work, and pray for those who still seek meaningful and productive jobs. Even as we raise up these intentions to God, we are challenged by these words from the gospel:

*“Everyone of you who does not
renounce all his possessions
cannot be my disciple.”
(Luke 14, 33)*

What or *Who* is your greatest possession? For most of us that which we prize most is an experience or a person rather than a material object. In order to begin to grasp the intent of Jesus’ demanding words, perhaps it is important to reflect on an endeavor that for many has just begun — education. Parents, was it more difficult for you (in letting them go) or for your children (in letting you go) on that very first day of school? Once you have done the “letting go,” there is the reality of new work, new environment, and different expectations. For those who are elderly, any move to a new home is challenging as well. I always find it helpful to begin to understand a reality by seeking the root meaning of the word. **E-ducare = to lead away from.** In other words, once we leave the womb we embark upon a journey of discovery known as education that goes beyond even the tomb! An essential component in this process of *letting go* or *being led away* from the familiar is the word *freedom*. Genuine human freedom is not really *freedom from*; rather it is *freedom for*.

Onesimus is a name which means “useful.” (Second Reading: Philemon 9-10, 12-17). He was supposedly a run-a-way slave who had become a disciple of Paul. Paul was in prison and saw Onesimus as “useful” now because of his new status as a Christian, thus “a brother in the Lord” to his formal owner. In a clever way, Paul appealed to the owner’s Christian charity for the freedom of Onesimus but wanted that freedom to be genuine, not forced. Thus, Paul was willing to release Onesimus and “give his heart” for the sake of justice and genuine human freedom.

The most difficult thing for us all is to trust in God’s will. In one sense, we are being asked to let God be God; and, in the process, we might know a freedom that goes beyond words — the real virtue of *detachment*. I can think of no clearer example of

this than the response of the young girl from Nazareth to the invitation of the angel.

*“May it be done to me
according to your word.”
(Luke 1, 38)*

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Bill Foley

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