

**27 September 2020**

**Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*Philippians 2:1-11*

[**Pouring water from a pitcher into a bucket**, then saying] “though in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped, but instead chose to empty himself, taking the form of a slave.” St. Paul beautifully describes Jesus’ total gift of self, most fully seen to us on the cross. Nothing held back and nothing wasted.

We’re his followers. We are Christians. And while clearly Paul tells us to bend a knee at the name of Jesus for his life poured out for us, we are also to imitate him. **“Have in you,” Paul says, “the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus....”** So, how does it feel to imagine now that the water in the pitcher is YOU being poured out [empty another pitcher into the bucket]?

Just speaking for myself, I feel pretty excited about it. I like to think of myself as someone who would pour out his life for others. However, that doesn’t mean I do it consistently. Pouring out yourself for others is one of those things that sounds good, but more rare to see in action. **We can be like the son in the Gospel account who says, “Yes, sir, I will pour myself out for others,” but then not do it.**

When is the last time you gave yourself away? Maybe you do it often—parents do it all the time—but maybe you’ll locked in a self-centered way of life just seeking your own pleasure and security. If so, St. Paul gives us a strategy to help us break loose: “Consider others as more important than yourself.”

OK, so first, this is a strategy, not a statement that others ARE more important than yourself. We indeed are equally loved by God and equally as important as each other. However, it can work as a strategy. I was pondering this scripture verse some years ago when I was supposed to go to a family’s house for dinner. As I was driving over I was listening to the Garrison Keillor radio show, which I really liked, especially when he told stories from the fictional town of Lake Wobegon. I hadn’t heard it in a while and he started the “news from Lake Wobegon” when I was just a few minutes from the family’s home, and it was really interesting! He was talking about religion! I could get a homily story out of this maybe! As I parked my car, I absolutely did not want to turn off the radio and get out. Then I thought, “Consider others as more important than yourself.” **I felt the short-term pain of self-sacrifice** when I chose to get out of the car. **But honestly, I felt lifted, joyful even, when I entered that house, knowing I had loved them well and did what God would have me do.**

Sometimes it does feel real good to love well and do God’s will. Other times, not so much. I prayed this text with a group that included our **elementary school principal**. We each chose a word or phrase to chew on and she picked “emptied himself,” and she said how at the end of the school day during this taxing COVID times, she sees how depleted, how empty, how used up, our teachers are. **When pouring yourself out doesn’t make you feel good but just makes you tired, then what?**

Then we pray. **This is the kind of prayer that helps me.** I remember that every day is a gift and that I’m supposed to use every day to serve and glorify God with Christ at my side. Then I recollect my day and the things that made me tired, and **if I can see them as pouring myself out in service to others and Jesus poured himself out in service to us, then I take strength in our communion.** Maybe you’ve heard these words before. It’s Jesus offer at Mass, and whenever we call upon him in prayer. These words: “Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and

eternal covenant that would be poured out for you.... [pour water from a chalice into our pitcher].  
**Doing "This" in memory of him is not only celebrated mass together; it is also pour out our own lives for others--through, with and in him.**

We can, after all, only empty ourselves, after he fills us.