



Thoughts on the Journey...

Suanne Gettings—Pastoral Associate - June 28, 2020 - Mt 10:37-42

Priorities were easily established when I was growing up because, for the most part, my priorities were ordered by my parents. They were good practicing Catholics and lived their faith

following the teachings of Jesus Christ. Because of their good example, their priorities became my priorities, more out of habit than conviction. There were expectations that were established early on: rules were to be followed, faith was to be practiced, commandments were to be obeyed, tasks to be done, goals were to be set, and the list goes on, all at age appropriate steps and phases. Consistency on their part is what gave me a sense of security and *belonging* as a child.

The same held true when I attended St. Teresa of Avila elementary school and was taught by the Sisters of Mercy. Their priorities and values mirrored those of my parents. The transition to attending school all day was easy because the expectations were clear.

In high school, I attended the Catholic boarding school, Immaculate Conception Academy in Oldenburg, Indiana where I lived with the Sisters of St. Francis and girls from the tristate area, five days a week. It was my first experience living away from home and it was a good experience overall. Like my parents, the sisters established priorities and expectations, it was a God-centered atmosphere for the most part. But for me, priorities began to shift with the influence of girls who came from different backgrounds and value systems.

Two days after I graduated from high school, I moved to the tourist town, Wisconsin Dells, to work for the summer. It was a haven for college students all over the Midwest because it was a great place to earn a lot of money in a short three months. Even though the money flowed, if you worked hard, the town was bankrupt in the morality department. The spiritual landscape was decidedly different from where I came. My new-found freedom was intoxicating (literally and figuratively). Priorities, morals, and a God-centered life were easy when I was surrounded by like-minds, but the safety nets were gone and now I had to take responsibility for my own moral compass. My faith life took a decided turn for the worse.

Matthew's gospel today concludes Jesus' teaching on mission to his apostles. Jesus makes it clear that if we are going to walk with him, we have a price to pay. The seemingly severe words of Jesus about making him the priority over family is simply an invitation to put everything in order. When we love God first, not only do we love our family more, but this love is more selfless and life giving, free of deception and illusion. When we walk with Jesus in all areas of our life our interior vision enriches and expands, as does our view of the world. We are called to enter into the depths of life where we meet the wonder of God's transforming love in the everyday rigors of life. When we live a life of Christ we become his disciples. Jesus also told his apostles that

“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Jesus makes it clear, we need sacrifice and give service to others to transform our lives. When we indulge ourselves and ignore our call to serve, we put ourselves on a road to self-destruction. Our relationship with God, our loved ones, our community and our world only finds life through self-giving.

Sometimes we learn lessons the hard way. Our great and continuing temptation is to create a new Jesus in our own image so that we can avoid the challenge of true discipleship. No one ever said that following Christ will be easy. How we order our choices, priorities, and values not only effect us but also have a rippling influence on the world.

I learned the hard way that the true path to peace comes with putting Jesus first. My journey to a holier life was paved with people who had their lives ordered to Jesus and his teachings. It was the Holy Spirit working through these disciples along the way, that helped me hit the reset button. It is critical for the growth of the Kingdom that we take up our cross, make Christ the nucleus of our lives, and commit to being his disciples.