

31st Wednesday II

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

My beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.

Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life, so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

But, even if I am poured out as a libation upon the sacrificial service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with all of you.

In the same way you also should rejoice and share your joy with me.

PSALM 27:1, 4, 13-14

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?
The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?*

*One thing I ask of the LORD;
this I seek:
To dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
That I may gaze on the loveliness of the
LORD and contemplate his temple.*

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD in the land of the living.

*Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.*

LUKE 14:25-33

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.'

Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops?

But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms.

In the same way, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."



My beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.

So, I'm to be obedient. I've heard that before: from my parents, my teachers and my supervisors. Sunday School teachers exhorted the same with the Ten Commandments. I get it. Don't like it much, but I get it.

Then I hear God is the one who works in me my desire to work. Isn't it enough that I'm compliant in my work, God works in me my desire, too? No wonder when I've spoken to critical self-described "Recovering Catholics" that they think faith is about becoming non-thinking, non-creative autobots.

The misunderstanding starts with the word, obedient. I equated it with compliance— do as you're told.

However, the word has its root in the term, "hearing".ⁱ Obedience, as expressed by Paul to the Philippians, is a "listening toward," to the God who was revealed in the self-giving Christ. The call is to be obedient to the model that Christ gives us. Obedience is the happy response.ⁱⁱ

So, a Christian needn't be a mindless zombie from the "Night of the Living Dead". The clue is that my desire does not originate in me; it is my response to another. It originates with another.

And let the word, desire, be the superlative it's meant to me. One doesn't use the word, desire, as if they were in a cafeteria line and saying that they desire a little bit of this and desire a little bit of that. One's whole focus orbits one's desire—that which originates in another.

I remember when I first crossed paths with my wife in (yes) another cafeteria line. She left quite an impression. It involved tap dancing, but enough of that. It was later, over a shared lunch, that my desire was enkindled. Originating in the other, it's the same desire that my whole life still orbits some 49 years later.

When we contemplate God's love and Heavenly bliss, allow yourself to respond with desire. If the desire feels tame, you are not allowing yourself to openly respond. Don't be shy. Desire as openly and fully as you can. Can you feel the emotion strain? If not, desire more, to your fullest effort. Your intuition may tell you that you cannot desire enough, not enough to even brush against the joy of Paradise. At that moment, allow your soul to cry out, "I can't, I can't, not on my own!"

It is at that time that you may be ready to be filled with the desire that God can and will make in you. You may experience a desire and energy beyond mere human expression. You may

come to understand Christ's sacrifice for our salvation—his desire for us. My mentor, Fr. Ken, says that the Bible can be seen as the history of God's relentless love pursuit for us, for you and me.ⁱⁱⁱ

Such a heavenly inspired desire cannot be contained by one small human heart—but it's not supposed to. It is to be shared with others, in shared community, in shared desire and work modeled on Jesus Christ.

For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.

You really are allowed such desire.



ⁱ Mary Ann Getty, R.S.M., *Philippians and Philemon*; Michael Glazier, Inc., p. 37

ⁱⁱ Bonnie B. Thurston, *Philippians and Philemon*; Liturgical Press, p. 98

ⁱⁱⁱ Rev. Kenneth W. Schmidt MA, LPC, NCC