

REVEREND MONSIGNOR RICHARD E. MARCHESE
THE TABLET, SEPTEMBER 9, 2007
23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Wisdom 9:13-18b (129C)
Philemon 9-10, 12-17
Luke 14:25-33



Without a doubt the cost of discipleship is great. It means many times over and over again just letting go. You pay a great price when you are a true follower, especially of truth itself. The price is very often your own life.

There are many of us who say: "Lord, I give it all to you." But do we really? It is not easy to renounce possessions that you are attached to, possessions that so often you feel you need in order to get through everyday life. In fact, you grow dependent on these things, especially if and when you move more and more away from the Lord.

There are in life so many forms of dependency and holding on. Sometimes we just won't let other people be who they are. Sometimes we grow dependent upon certain structures. Sometimes we invest in our own plans and ideas. But because it has to be our way or no way, we lose the spirit of what it is all about.

This week we again turn to the wisdom of the Old Testament: "Who can know God's counsel, or who can conceive what the Lord intends?" When you enter into the mind of God, you are given a whole new perspective of life. If you are willing, you begin to take a new stance toward reality. What you thought was so important has little or no meaning for you at all now. Sometimes we are shocked into this reality, especially when what we thought was so necessary for our existence just seems to fade away. Sometimes someone or something is just taken from us or just snatched from our hands. It is a jolt. But there is always a lesson—if we are willing to see it.

In today's Gospel Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem where He will eventually face His Passion and Death. What is so consoling about His message, in spite of its apparent hardness, is the fact that He does not just point the way out to us. He walks with us. He supports us. He encourages us. Ultimately He himself makes the supreme sacrifice. Contrary to what we may think, we are never alone.

The Book of Wisdom today says: "for the deliberations of mortals are timid, and unsure are our plans." We know the oft-quoted saying: "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." If that is the case, then I think I have made God laugh many times.

A number of years back I was traveling by car with a priest friend to the Trappist Monastery in Spencer, Massachusetts for my annual retreat. Traffic was extremely heavy, bumper-to-bumper actually. I looked out from the passenger side and saw a sign nailed to a tree by the side of the road which read: "Surrender to Jesus. Live forever." I thought it rather strange at the time until the day after I got to the Monastery. I received a phone call that somewhat would change the course of my life. I was asked to do something that I never thought I would have the strength to do. During my week at the Monastery, I went to seek the counsel of a very wise and spiritual monk who said to me: "Unless you surrender and let it all happen, you will never have peace. Go back to your cell and prostrate yourself on the floor and give it all to Jesus." It was an experience I shall never forget. The God of surprises made Himself known to me. God was laughing again. But the surrender made the words of Jesus possible: "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

There are many calls to discipleship within calls. God may call us to a particular way of life, but then within that vocation He asks so much more of us. Everyday, every moment of our journey, must be an act of faith. It is impossible to do it any other way, because each of us wants to *really* 'live forever'.