

Call to Worship – 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Sept. 3-4, 2016

Who can forget the demands of a career or the needs of a family? They weigh heavily upon our consciousness as we stumble through tumultuous days. At first glance, today's readings sound impossibly harsh. What does Jesus mean when he proclaims that in order to be his disciple we must "hate" our father, our mother, our brother, our sister, our children and even our own life?

Our finite minds shackle our understanding of a God enormous, and human frailty distracts us from the need to remain centered in the Lord. Still, the gospel message is clear; the things of the earth must be second to the things of heaven. God alone can calm our restless hearts, but the challenge to be steadfast and focused is daunting. How does one remain in the world but not of the world?

Happily, Love sends the Spirit to make our path to discipleship straight, and faith tells us that all things are possible with God. By prayerfully embracing God at the center, our work, our relationships and our earthly responsibilities become not only meaningful but surprisingly joyful. Wisdom, God's gift to those who rely on endless grace, awakens a new mindfulness.

Essentially, that which sounded harsh is really an extraordinarily loving invitation to fully participate in the life of the Creator. There is a peace and a gentle presence at the core of those who toil in unison with the Holy. Has this enduring peace touched you? On this last weekend of summer, when we pause to celebrate the dignity of labor, let us rejoice in the opportunity to toil in the vineyard of our gracious God!

- Eileen Omundsen