

Father Rudy's Reflections
The Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time
July 2, 2023

The costs and rewards of discipleship

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

As I write to you today, my message is simple, yet for many of us, it is so difficult to understand, embrace, and be truly alive in our hearts. It is this: God must be the central focus of our lives. He must be loved beyond all others in order for us to love at all. Through God's grace and mercy, and yes, his love, we are able to maneuver through our human lives and fulfill our destiny. And, in this intimate, committed, and passionate relationship with our Lord, we will find all that we are looking for.

On this Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we hear in Matthew's Gospel Jesus's words about our mission as disciples of Christ. It might be a bit jarring to hear Christ's instructions that we must love him beyond our loved ones, yet it is exactly what we must do because it is in our relationship with him that we are able to extend it outward toward others so that we may love them without ego or need for reciprocity. This gospel of love means the selfless ability to move out of ourselves in service and sacrifice.

The idea of Christianity, then, birthed in the sacrament of our Baptism, enhances and develops our vision of the world and allows us to transform our lives, especially in our relationship with family, friends, and colleagues. Because we have a deep and abiding love of Christ, we are called to give of ourselves, sometimes in sacrifice and suffering for the benefit of others. In thinking about examples of those saints who gave up their lives for their faith or even those ordinary heroes whose stories inspire us daily, we, as human beings, are called to do the same. There may, indeed, be a cost to us, but alternatively, there is often a reward. Even in a simple act of kindness that takes us out of ourselves, we know the delight in someone's eyes in doing so. A generous spirit, a generous action, a generous love—may we all be inspired in his name to transform lives so we may transform our own.

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'ethrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new. . .
—John Donne, English poet, *Holy Sonnet 14**

Yours in Christ,
Father Rudy