

21otB

The Scandal of Discipleship

In 1972, prior to the Republican and Democratic national Conventions, a small group of men were arrested for breaking into the Democratic National Headquarters at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. This political scandal brought down the Nixon Administration. Scandals in political life are not new, and they show up from time to time. Scandals are those things that shock, anger and alienate people. They expected something different and feel they have been betrayed. But there are different types of scandals. There are scandals that are a result of moral failure and those that are a result of moral integrity

The gospel of John states: “Many of the disciples of Jesus remarked.” *This sort of talk is hard to endure.* Previously, it was Jesus’ opponents who were scandalized by his teaching about being the bread of life”. Now it is his own followers who find Jesus too challenging, too demanding! Like the Israelites in the desert during the wilderness experience, some of Jesus’ followers began to murmur against him—that is, they defect. They simply find it too hard to serve Jesus any longer. **He doesn’t fit their expectations, they are alienated and some leave him.**

There comes a time in our faith life when the radical demand of being Jesus’ disciples shatters our illusions and calls us out of our comfort zone to walk with him as He desires not as we desire. **That moment, or series of moments, will call upon us to make a decision as to whom we will serve.** Will we serve the Lord, or some other idol or loyalty that does not give life, and may even take life? No disciple of Jesus is shielded from this choice. In point of fact, it is an essential aspect and requirement of discipleship. In essence, can we accept the “scandal” of Jesus and the radical commitment he summons us all to in this life?

Being nourished by the Bread of Life, on Jesus himself, entails a covenant relationship with him that is based on enfleshing his person to others through us, his followers. This happens when the way of Jesus, the way of loving like him in the world is made concrete in our day to day lives. We recognize that doing this is only possible by consistent and frequent communication with the Lord in the Eucharist, his people, prayer and action born of service loving in the world. Whenever we see a disciple offering some level of self-giving to another we see the extension of the Bread of life to another. Following Jesus can bring us into situations that may appear scandalous to others. For instance, maybe we break ranks with our social class, political party, ethnic or racial group, religious groups and so on to reach out to another different from ourselves. **For some this will be scandalous behavior, but as we see this may be in conformity to Christ. Some may leave us as they left Jesus because of this!**

The letter to the Eph. illustrates the nature of this relationship to the Lord using the model of the covenant of marriage. Today the wording of this letter may not be appreciated by many because of the sexist style language. However, it should be noted that women in those days were considered the property of the husband or that the male

head of the household was the patriarch, with the power of life and death over the sons of a family. Women were often entirely dependent on their husbands for survival. But Eph. changes the nature of the relationship from property and the fiat of the husband to one of covenant love and mutual respect—a leap to be sure. To be a disciple of Jesus is to cling to him as a husband clings to his wife and Israel to Yahweh.

This clinging to the Lord as a disciple is the response of those who return their commitment to the Lord as a gift of thanks for God's unmerited love given to all in Jesus. It is a love that desires an intimate relationship with every human person demonstrated must thoroughly on the cross. A response to this call to each person for such a relationship will entail a scandal of sorts because often the person will be unable and unwilling to mirror the culture around him or her. As stated before, they will **be out of step; they will appear to be a traitor to their race, or social class and so on....**

In his book, *Disturbers of the Peace*, by Emanon Bredin it states:

This question about Jesus becomes more acute when we remember that those who encountered the historical Jesus seem to have consistently misunderstood him or rejected him...If we heap titles on him, pray to him, use all the correct formulae about him, we may simply be keeping him and the scandal of him at a distance. Yet he desires to work from within our lives. He seeks to lay claim to our hearts, to eternally disturb us, to whisper to us about perfection. He asked us to believe that he is passionately involved in our lives that he is still healing us, making us whole by troubling us to be different.

Where can we go Lord? You have the words of eternal Life!