

22 Sunday Year A

When people commit themselves to be faithful to one another in a loving relationship (such as marriage) they are encouraged to do by all that the relationship seems to offer them. Their love for each other is **full of promise**.

Inevitably they soon discover that the relationship is also **full of demands**. There is giving as well as receiving. In fact there are times when there seems to be *more giving* than receiving.

Today the scriptures elaborate on the *basic* demands of being faithful to our love relationship with God...

We learn that we are *won over* to our spiritual commitment by the **promises** that God makes. We are 'seduced' (1 Reading) by assurances that God will offer us/we will know: *viz.* personal peace, a growth in the security of his love, enjoy freedom of spirit, and ultimately life eternal.

As soon as we enter into that relationship wholeheartedly we begin to experience the **costs of discipleship**:

For example, we find ourselves to be continually *disturbed* by the promptings of our conscience. The call of God is persistent and urgent, forever inviting a fresh response. We cannot ignore it. It is like a 'fire' that cannot be suppressed or subdued or smothered (1st Reading).

We are challenged to confront the prevailing attitudes and behaviour, the current ways of thinking, with Gospel ideals. To contradict, for example, the individualism, the materialism, the atheism of the society we now live in. *Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you* (2nd Reading). We are called to forego popularity for integrity.

We are expected to accept humiliation and derision and abuse for our loyalty in the faith: to become *a daily laughing stock, the butt of everyone's jokes* (1st Reading).

Responding to the voice of the Spirit of God will lead us into suffering of one kind or another as we follow in the footsteps of our Lord (Gospel).

We will also find ourselves having to contend with those who would dissuade us from our commitment, or seek to diminish it.

These can include our friends (as Jesus experienced with Peter). We also have to resist the influence and pressure of those whose presence is hidden from us but whose desire is to weaken our resolve and whose temptations continually beset us: *Get thee behind me Satan* (Gospel).

The Gospel reminds us in the very words of our Lord that the way to the life our heart desires is by renunciation of self-interest; by acceptance of our responsibilities; by trusting obedience to the will of God. We are to *take up this Cross*.

All this we know (these are the fundamentals of our faith) – but in the daily struggle, beset as we by the **demands** of being a disciple, we can forget the **promises** and be blind to the rewards of faithfulness. We should make our own the prayer of today's Gospel Acclamation:

Enlighten the eyes of our mind so that we can see what hope your call holds for us.