

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time
Sept. 7 & 8, 2018

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Commitment

Biblical scholars today aren't sure if the word they thought referred to carpenter, as in Joseph or Jesus, but it may have included builder, construction worker. I can picture Jesus with a hard hat on.

In 1998, 2002, and 2003 I was the primary contact for building projects at Francis House and our Franciscan Villa where the sisters reside. Long before we broke ground there were the budgets, seeking subcontractors bids, land surveys and building permits and more to consider. Can't begin until you know you have planned well.

Perhaps you have had to paint a room in your house and needed to calculate how much you need so you don't run out of paint half way through the project.

And we all know what preparation for a move is like!

Today Jesus is asking us about something much more profound than any of these situations. Jesus is asking if we have what it takes to live our lives in the way we've chosen. He is speaking to a crowd that has been following him: some of whom were curious, some wanted to know more about him, and some were previously healed or seeking healing. But were they willing to make a commitment to Jesus' way of loving?

We have seen what commitment to something looks like. All we have to do is look to our sisters and brothers at the Boarder, or our own Lufulungula Family, who are so committed to a safe life for their children, they will leave their country, willing to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, pain and the dangers on the journey.

But yes, they have an immediate need, a passion for the better life, a goal for which they are willing to become nomads. But do we have any such commitment that will drive us to give our all for that commitment? We ask ourselves: Do I have what it takes to inconvenience myself for the good of another? Do I have the humility to be uncomfortable? To be the servant, instead of being served? To not be so tied down to my family that I have no time to work toward change for others? Do I have what it takes to build a Christian life?

It is not enough for us to say we attend church and therefore we are committed. That's like saying we go to family gatherings but if someone in the family is in need we are nowhere to be found.

I believe we need models who know what it takes to be a committed Christian. Rita is a model. She came to Francis House and lived for a few months in our care. During those months we learned she had five children, one of whom was adopted. While they were growing she continued to take in young children who needed a temporary place to stay. Eventually she took in unwed mothers who needed support through their pregnancy and in the early months of the babies' lives. This was before Joseph House. Her commitment to Christ was evident.

Another model is Casey who was left on her own when her mother died. She managed to finish college, get a job teaching physically challenge children, then specialized in teaching deaf children. She saw what was happening to these deaf children during school breaks and in the summer so Casey made a financial sacrifice to rent a space during the summer so the kids would have a place to play and others to hang out with who knew sign language.

Our commitment to Christ has to show up somehow, somewhere in our lives.

A question for the week: Where is my commitment taking me?