

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 6, 2025

If you've ever tried to make a dish you've never made before without a recipe, you know that it can be quite a challenge. All sorts of things can go wrong. We can use the wrong ingredients. Or combine them in the wrong way. Or use the wrong pan. Or cook them for the wrong amount of time or at the wrong temperature. And things can sometimes turn out badly. VERY badly.

Thank God for recipes. Most of us would be lost without them. But recipes aren't always enough. In fact, sometimes when we SEE the details of a recipe it doesn't make us more anxious to make the dish, it actually discourages us from the attempt. As you well know, sometimes recipes just look WAY too complicated. Too many hard-to-find or expensive ingredients. Too many fancy gadgets or kitchen tools required. Too many advanced techniques. Too many things that can go wildly wrong. Too much time. In other words, WAY too difficult. And often, when that's the case, we quit before we even start. "I could never do that," we might think to ourselves.

In today's Gospel reading from St. Luke we hear from the mouth of Jesus a certain kind of recipe, the steps necessary to spread Jesus' message, that is, to proclaim in every town that the Kingdom of God is at hand. After all, this was important stuff, and Jesus wanted to make sure his disciples knew what was expected of them. And so he lays out some pretty specific instructions for them, some concrete nuts and bolts of how they are to go about sharing all he has said and did with anyone willing to listen.

And thank God they did take it seriously. You and I would never be here today if faithful men and women hadn't been willing to share what they had seen and heard, share their experiences of God. Eventually they took this message to the ends of the earth, shouting it from every mountain and rooftops. And followers of Jesus did that same thing century after century after century. Some believers today proclaim the Good News of Jesus in quite similar ways to those early disciples. We owe them a lot. In some ways, we owe them everything.

And you know where this is going. You've heard it hundreds of times before. You might even be about to roll your eyes or shake your head or fold your arms or let out a sigh. I know. I get it. We've been told this to death. It's almost become a kind of cliché, but I'll say it anyway. Here goes - It wasn't just the disciples long ago who were supposed to spread the Good News, spread the message of Jesus. Each of us by our baptism, is supposed to do precisely the same in this time and place.

There - I said it. And yet, I have a feeling that I know what you are thinking. And the reason I do is because I often have that exact same feeling. I'm guessing that nearly everyone here is probably thinking a similar thought. And it is this:

"I don't know if I really want to do that. It just seems too hard." Just seems too hard. That's it, right? The RECIPE for discipleship is too hard. The RECIPE for following Jesus is just too hard. The RECIPE for being a faithful Christian is too hard. The RECIPE for proclaiming the Good News and being a witness to the wondrous acts of God is simply too hard. And I'm not sure I really want to attempt it.

And when we think that way, we're kind of right. Discipleship IS really hard and challenging. Following Jesus IS hard. Sharing the Good News with others IS hard. All of that, I think is true. If we want something a lot easier, there are other paths we can journey down. But if we want THIS path, if we accept and acknowledge THIS Lord, if we hope and trust in THIS Savior, then it will never be easy. We only need to look at the cross and the life of the saints to be reminded of that.

Maybe I am painting too simplistic a picture as to why we can be so reluctant to embrace our calling in the fullest way possible. Maybe it's not simply an unwillingness to make the attempt. Maybe it's because we feel inadequate, not up to the task. Maybe we just don't know what to say or how to say it. Maybe we have doubts, and feel that disqualifies us from entering into discussions of faith and belief and mission and such. Maybe we simply don't feel "smart" enough or

“deep” enough to tackle the really big questions, questions about God and life and meaning and the destiny we each hope for.

Well, my dear friends, we really don’t have to be. Our lives will do most of the talking. That’s right - our lives. As you’ve heard me say before, whether we like it or not, believe it or not, accept it or not, we are always speaking volumes to others. We are “saying” things to others all the time about what our values are, what we feel is important, how we view other people, and in whom we place our hope and trust.

In other words, faith doesn’t always require a lot of talking or explaining. Faith is not something we can easily “prove” to someone else anyway. Rather, faith is most perfectly on display in a life well-lived, a life of joy and hope and trust, a life of generosity and mercy, a life not grounded in a philosophy or in statements of faith, but rather grounded in a PERSON, built upon a PERSON, sustained and transformed and saved by a PERSON, the person of Jesus. Kindness, mercy, compassion, hope, trust, generosity, love . .

Mix all that together, however you would like, and be astounded at what God can and will bring forth from imperfect you and me. Now I believe that’s a recipe for a beautiful world!