

Twenty-third Sunday: Have a Plan!

A soccer ball and a music book -- Katy faced a very difficult decision. Many of her friends had signed up to play soccer, but she also liked to play the piano and she couldn't do both. So -- Katy came up with an idea. She sat down with a sheet of paper and drew a line down the center of the page. At the top of the page on one side, "Piano." On the other side "Soccer." +/- of each and Katy made her decision to continue piano.

We all face important decisions in life. The most important decision - whether we will follow Jesus or not. "Oh, that is an easy decision. Of course I will follow Jesus," but Jesus warns that it isn't always easy. He said that we should sit down and count the cost. Will we follow him if it means giving up friends - moving to a far away place - if it means we'll never live have a big house or fancy car? Are willing to give up everything to follow Jesus? Dear Jesus help us to make the choice to follow you.

St. Paul had a difficult situation to deal with. He was under arrest in Rome, but he could meet with the members of the Christian community, preach and even make converts. One of these converts was a man whom Paul calls Onesimus. Onesimus became one of Paul's aides but Onesimus revealed to Paul that he was an escaped slave. There was an additional problem, Onesimus didn't just run away from his Master, he stole some goods. To complicate things, Onesimus' master, Philemon, was a Christian.

What should Paul do? Paul thought it over and devised the plan (like Katy). He sent Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter from Paul himself asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

Paul's actions followed the instruction that Jesus gave in the Gospel. Jesus spoke about a man who uses his intelligence to decide if he can build something, and a King who uses his intelligence to decide if he should go to battle against his enemy. What Jesus is saying is that this intelligence we use in temporal affairs should also be used in the spiritual life. We all need a plan to protect and nurture the Life of Christ.

Folks, the battle between good and evil is real. The forces of evil are against us. But we can call upon the Presence of Christ in our lives and lead others to seek His Presence in their Lives. Every choice we make for God, no matter how little it might seem, is a victory in the battle for the Kingdom.

The devil is waging war. Jesus is waging war. We are waging war. So we need to have a plan.

There is an expression "avoid the occasion of sin." If someone is inviting us to a place where we could end up behaving badly in the eyes of God, that situation is an occasion of sin. We may know that a party is going to be loaded with drugs and drunks. We may know that if we are alone with someone, we are liable act badly - We need a plan.

Secondly, we need to consider the areas where we can go on the attack by making the Presence of God real. We need a plan to incorporate more and more positive aspects to our lives. We need to have a plan on how we can be better Christians, better Catholics not just by avoiding things, but by doing things.

So what is your plan? What is my plan? How are we going to make the presence of Jesus Christ more real in our society? The truth is that the plan the Lord has for each of us is different. That is because we are all unique reflections of the Lord. But there are common elements. Our lives need to revolve around Jesus Christ. We need to pray every day. We need to make the best use of the gifts God gave us. Basically speaking we need to live for the Lord, serving His Presence in others.

Today's message is really simple. God has given us all intelligence. We need to use it. We are all engaged in the Battle. May your plan and my plan strengthen our world with Jesus. For the Power of Christ is upon us. With Christ the devil doesn't stand a chance, in our individual lives or in our world. Jesus Christ is the Victor. He wins. He always wins. We pray today that we might have the courage to join him in war and share in His Victory.