It is about a turning point today …

Jesus makes a resolute decision

to listen deeply and follow his “call”,

his deep down purpose.

And his “call”?

It took him to a place called Jerusalem.

And in Jerusalem,

Jesus met his lot:

delivered into the hands of the local authorities,

they put him to death;

and three days later he rose from the dead.

The trek to Jerusalem?

No easy road for Jesus.

More often than not,

Jesus and his entourage

flipped cultural norms upside down.

Jesus and company pushed boundaries;

frequently entering communities

as racially and religiously mixed

like the Samaritan village.

Sometimes met with severe opposition,

met with crossed arms and glaring eyes,

unwelcomed, they packed up,

shook the dust from their feet,

moved on,

without passing any judgment

(except for a couple of fiesty,

revenge-seeking disciples named

James and John).

The road to Jerusalem was no easy road to hoe.

Met by religious authorities,

who time and time again,

confronted …

questioned Jesus’ motives …

his actions –

eating with sinners,

touching and healing lepers,

associating with women,

challenging the hypocrisy of religious authorities

around deeply held beliefs and doctrine.

And, all along,

Jesus remained faithful

to who he was,

staying true to his call ...

purpose in life.

Called by the Father to enter fully into life,

all along the way to Jerusalem,

Jesus pitched his tent

among those most in need of God’s recognition,

healing,

encouragement,

reconciliation,

and love.

Certainly in our day and age

Jesus still encounters –

more often than not the disenfranchised –

immigrants,

peoples of different religious and racial ethnicities,

gay, lesbian and bisexual peoples yearning to love, refugees wanting for home,

the poor.

And, it is there, that Jesus,

rooted in his call,

his deepest purpose,

pitches his tent

and makes his home.

So too,

no matter who we are,

whom we choose to love and to call our own;

We are called to make ourselves available,

to follow, to give away ourselves away

in service of a faith that does justice.

Faithfulness to this call

in our Christian lives is not easy!

Following Jesus

will take us to some pretty out of the way,

sticky places, often fraught with tension.

And, yet, that is exactly where Jesus hangs out.

True to his call …

his deepest purpose …

his center

and yet always reaching out to the frontiers …

We might ask ourselves:

What are the major turning points in our lives?

Where does Jesus call us to stand as the Church?

How do we navigate the inherent tensions

that might exist as we faithfully live into

who we are called to be?

My friends, to follow Jesus requires freedom.

And to be truly free

means being faithful to who we are

in our deepest selves.

That means to love.

“For you were called for freedom,

brothers and sisters.

And to use this freedom as an opportunity

to serve one another through love.”

Loving is difficult

especially when we disagree

or we find ourselves righteous

or when we are not confident within our own skin

or we are just plain afraid.

We make excuses.

We avoid.

We turn and walk away.

We give into the common,

long-standing rhetoric of society

and sometimes even of the Church.

How often – at those moments –

do we have other things to do,

jobs to accomplish,

plans to realize?

“Lord, let me go first and bury my father.”

Let me return to what I cherish.”

And at that moment that God calls,

we can remain stagnant in “our ways”

or getting out there

and starting to do

what God has called us to do;

but we can't do both;

we cannot hang onto the plow

and look the other way,

it just does not work.

So we must make a decision.

And to be a Christian,

is to let go of the plow

and go with Jesus.

As a student at SU

so often reminds me as I leave the office,

“Fr. Mike, be sure to make good choices today!”

And, the one choice,

we have is to always follow Jesus,

to hang with Jesus often in places

we may not even be able to imagine,

to consider and discern

new ways of looking at issues

and our deeply held views and traditions …

all the while staying true to our call

and our center. (our deepest purpose)

It is a daily choice,

a constant choice,

as to what we decide to do,

whether we follow

or turn back to our plows.

Recently I visited (a holy spot)

the Jesuit Retreat Center in Los Altos, CA,

where in the summer of 1996

I made my pre-ordination retreat.

There – atop a hill over looking a huge expanse –

I sat and I heard Jesus call –

loud and clear.

The conversation ensued:

“Michael, I desire to be with you!”

“Lord, if you really knew me,

you would not want to be with me!” (My Excuse)

“Michael, I know you and I love you,

and with the two of us together,

all things are possible!” (Jesus’ invitation)

And, you know,

although not always free to let go,

when I have let go

and have allowed Jesus to lead the way,

I am surprised

and more often than not …

I find great joy!

**Mike Bayard, S.J.**

**13th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2013**

**Christ our Hope**

**Seattle, WA**