

Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Mark 6:30-34

Dear Friends,

Jesus has a plan to take the disciples away for rest and prayer. He is sidetracked by the large gathering of people. Mark says, ***"His heart was moved with pity for them."* (Mk 6:34)**

This Greek word that is here translated, pity, is used two other times in the Gospels. In these two cases, it is translated, "compassion". It means very strong feelings of deep concern. The Good Samaritan experienced these feelings as he came upon the victim on the roadside. (Lk 10:33) The father of the Prodigal Son is described with the same feelings. ***"While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. (Lk 15:20)***

As Jesus is filled with compassion, his first response is to teach the people. Jesus' basic message to the people is of a God of love. He heals some and shortly he will feed the hungry crowd but his fundamental gift is an invitation into a love that will go far beyond the necessary healing and the urgent hunger of the large crowd that is just a symbol for all humanity.

Jesus' message to all is that in our broken and troubled human condition there is an opening to new life and wondrous love of a gracious God. The entire struggle of the Gospel of Mark is the failure of the disciples, as a mirror of us, to trust in the goodness and love of the God revealed by Jesus.

Our faith journey is similar to the disciples' described by Mark as determined to move ahead on their own agenda. They increasingly find fault with Jesus' plan and have a plan of their own.

The entire goal of our life is to move away from our own agenda to Jesus' unveiling of the Father's will. It is a struggle for us all the way.

Jesus in his compassion is patient with us as he was patient with the crowd on the seashore, and especially with the disciples. Yet, he insists that his is the way to truth and freedom. His words are the gift of wisdom and light no matter how much his poverty and rejection and apparent failure shatter our common sense idea of reality. The Jerusalem thing was an obstacle for the disciples and remains the same for us today. Losing our life just does not seem to be the way to save our life.

Our agenda, like the crowd and the disciples, is for Jesus to fix our problems. Jesus, indeed, has compassion on our predicament of being flawed human beings. However, Jesus wants to fix us in a much deeper and total way. Jesus' plan goes way beyond our very limited program. Jesus has a plan of compassion that shatters the narrowness and constraints of our dreams and hopes. The love revealed in his life and word open the possibility of satisfying the deepest hungers and longings of our heart that so often escapes our awareness in the rush of life.

We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and be open to a new and marvelous journey of love in the midst of all our anxieties and fears. His compassion holds a hope we have hardly dreamt of. Deep personal prayer is the surest way to get in touch with this reality hidden in the depth of our hearts.