

13th Sunday, July 2, 2017

After graduating from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, James Martin began work at General Electric. While there, according to James, “you had to be tough, almost impervious to criticism, willing to dump on others, work your butt off, and be able to triumph in Machiavellian maneuverings.” The rewards, however, were great--- a nice salary and a glamorous New York lifestyle. James looked to be on the fast track to riches and power in the corporate world.

But after a few years, James gave all that up. He joined the Jesuits. As part of his training, he worked in a hospice for the dying, run by Mother Theresa’s Missionaries of Charity. Eventually, he was ordained a priest. It was a different life than what he had experienced before. He had lost one life, only to find a new one

In today’s gospel reading, we hear that whoever loses his or her life for the sake of Christ will find it. Those who do that will find a life far richer, far more rewarding than they could ever imagine or hope for.

There may be legitimate reasons why we cannot make changes in our life as radical as those changes which James Martin made in his. It would be irresponsible for parents to abandon their children, in the belief that they are responding to the invitation of the gospel. It would be irresponsible for people to renege on their commitments, just because those commitments weigh heavily upon them. When Christ calls us to lose our life, he is not inviting us to escape from the difficulties of our present life. He may be inviting us to embrace those difficulties more fully. Not everyone can or should make the clean break that James Martin made in his life.

But everyone can examine their life, to see how closely it conforms to Jesus Christ. All of us can seek to discern what elements in our life oppose the values of Christ, so that we can let go of them, so that we can lose them. Do we seek earthly wealth more than spiritual treasures? Do we try to control others around us more than we try to control our own desires and passions? What are our ambitions?

Do we seek above all to promote ourselves and advance our own career?
Or, do we seek above all for God's will to be done, on earth as it is in heaven?

Whoever loses his or her life for the sake of the gospel will find it. Those who do that will find a life far richer, far more rewarding than they could ever imagine or hope for. That is what Christ is calling us to.