

Father Dave's Homily

09/16/12 24 B

-- I don't have a Twitter account, so I don't participate in that type of social networking. But I recently read an interesting article from a Presbyterian minister who does.

-- On a Twitter account, you can choose to "follow" someone—that means you will receive their posts. He got on one day and saw a message encouraging him to "follow" Jesus Christ. It turns out Jesus Christ has a Twitter account.

-- He started reading it, and found many of the posts to be insightful and witty. And it's probably giving a lot of publicity to the man or woman who was lucky enough to be the first to grab this noted name for his own account.

-- In our day and age, Twitter is one of the few places where it's good to be a follower. We are encouraged to be leaders. We hold many leadership institutes, even in the Church. We want to take the lead.

-- Yet Jesus asks us to follow him, just as he asked his early disciples. And following him doesn't mean what it does on Twitter. Following Jesus doesn't mean simply reading his postings, even if those happen to be biblical postings. It's not a casual type of thing.

-- In his own day, Jesus had some people who "followed" him casually. They listened to him when he came to town. They admired much of what he said. Many were fascinated by his miracles.

-- But they were the same people who, only a few weeks ago in our gospel, said he was too much when he came out with difficult sayings and difficult challenges. They quit following him at that point.

-- Even Jesus' closest followers found his teaching difficult. Simon Peter had a great insight when he recognized Jesus as the Messiah. But when Jesus began to lay out what that really meant, it was too much for Peter. He wanted the triumphant Messiah, not a suffering Messiah.

-- Jesus gave him a sharp rebuke, even calling his remarks satanic. The difference, though, between Peter and the casual disciples who left when he said something difficult was that he hung in there. And eventually he

took up his cross to follow Jesus, right to the end of his own life which was death by crucifixion.

-- We now hear those words *deny yourself...take up your cross...* and they sound difficult to us. This is not the casual following of a popular teacher. This is a serious commitment.

-- And it is. But “denying yourself” doesn’t mean engaging in a form of psychological self-hatred. Nor does it mean mindlessly following a messiah figure to a suicidal end, such as the followers of David Koresh did in Waco, Texas.

-- It does mean putting aside my own preferences to care for others in need. It means embracing a calling I know comes from God, even when I anticipate it will mean much self-sacrifice.

-- The suffering servant of our first reading did just that. He was faithful to God even when he faced resistance. He did not fight evil with evil. And so we also hear this as the first reading at the beginning of Holy Week.

-- Each of us faces that question: What type of follower of Jesus will we be? Will we follow Jesus much as people follow other people on Twitter—reading their posts, sometimes commenting, but not making a real commitment?

-- Or will we make that true commitment to follow the Lord, taking up our cross however that comes to us in life. It’s a tough decision, but we have the strength Jesus Christ himself gives us to make that commitment.