

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 3, 2017

Things are getting serious now. Up to this time it has been a rather happy and carefree time with Jesus. He has performed many miracles in his popularity has increased by leaps and bounds. It has been a lot of fun to be with Jesus and it has been profoundly moving to listen to him preach and teach.

But today the gospel takes on an ominous tone. Jesus begins to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly and be killed and on the third day be raised. Suffering is serious business. It takes all the fun out of life. We, like Peter, will try to avoid suffering any way we can. Peter said, "God forbid, No such thing shall ever happen to you."

St. Teresa of Avila, on the other hand, wrote that if angels could envy, they would envy us, because we have the ability to suffer. When we sacrifice or give up something for another, it is the greatest sign of love.

In the story, "The Gift of the Magi," the author, O. Henry, tells the of Jim and Della, a young married couple deeply in love. As their anniversary approached, Della wondered what she could get for Jim She wanted to give him a gold watch chain to match his pocket watch, but she didn't have the money. Then she got an idea. She had long beautiful hair and so she decided to cut her hair, sell it, and use the money to buy the chain for Jim's watch. On their anniversary, she returned home from work with a beautiful little box containing the gold chain. Suddenly she began to worry for she knew that Jim admired her long hair and wondered if he would be disappointed that she cut it for money. When she entered their apartment, she was surprised to find Jim home and waiting for her. In his hand was a neatly wrapped box containing his gift for her. When Della removed her scarf, Jim saw Della's short hair and tears began to flow; but he said nothing. Instead he gave Della his gift. When Della opened it she couldn't believe her eyes There, in the box was a set of silver combs for her long hair. When Jim opened his gift, he too was astonished, for there was the beautiful gold chain for his pocket watch. Only then did Della realize that Jim had pawned his gold watch to buy her the silver combs.

The story of sacrifice is a story of love. To give up something or to suffer for someone is the most powerful expression of love.

When Peter tries to talk Jesus out of suffering, Jesus says, get behind me Satan. Just last week Jesus told Peter, upon this rock I will build my church. Now, Jesus says to Peter, 'you are an obstacle to me.'

Sometimes we intentionally place obstacles in front of us. When an athlete runs the hurdles, he knows what is coming and he practices to get over the obstacle. Here at Sacred Heart we have an insurance company that continually pesters us about tripping hazards. It's always tiny, picayune things that cause people to fall. Hardly anyone gets hurt jumping the hurdles which are 1 meter high. But there are many injuries from tiny obstacles.

What are the obstacles in our life? What are the things that get in the way of our total well-being and vitality? This Labor Day Weekend can be a time of reflection to better appreciate the more difficult things in our life. Specifically our work. May it not be onerous or debilitating, rather, may our work be a pathway to a more full and complete life.