

Dear Fr. Larry,

I hope you are keeping well back in Henderson. I'm getting ready to fly back to Africa tomorrow and I could not leave the US without saying thank you to you and your parishioners for the wonderful reception I received last month at Holy Name. It was a great privilege for me to celebrate Mass in your parish and to speak to the faithful about the ministry of the Missionaries of Africa in Ethiopia. I recently got word from Fr. Ray Clark that Holy Name contributed \$8,323.63 for the mission appeal in just one weekend! That's truly amazing and a wonderful sign of solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Africa. If at all possible, please express my deepest gratitude to your parishioners and assure them of my prayers as I return to my second home in the mountains of northern Ethiopia. I wish you all the best for a fruitful ministry in the upcoming pastoral year. Take care and may Our Lord always watch over you.

God bless

Fr. Paul Reilly Missionaries of Africa.

This weekend Jesus uses an exaggeration to help to make his point. We hear that great crowds were traveling with him and he says to them, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." These words seem very harsh for a man that preaches that the greatest command is love. But Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem where he will face his death on the cross and he well knows the type of total commitment that it takes to be a disciple. A disciple must be willing to allow nothing to come between him and the kingdom of God. As we live here on earth as disciples we are called to do all that we can to bring the Kingdom of God into the lives of those around us. This takes a commitment and a willingness to live a greater truth. The problem with living the greater truth is the division that Jesus so starkly presents to the crowds. Can we live this truth if it means that we will be separated from those we love the most? Too often I find myself watering down the Gospel so that it is not as much of a challenge or failing to discuss the more difficult aspects of the Gospel. It would be easy to let ourselves contemplate the man who is wishing to build a tower and what he should do or the king going into battle. These two examples seem very practical. Of course you want to make sure that you have what you will need or can get what you need to complete the tower before you ever dig a foundation. And a king who does not weigh his odds against another army before they go into battle would seem reckless and foolish. But these very practical stories that are easy to understand when applied to our discipleship with Christ become a little more complicated. Are we willing to give all that we have to be a disciple? Are we willing to commit everything and every moment of our lives to following him and building up his kingdom? Are we willing to commit ourselves to the struggle of establishing the kingdom of God in our world?

Let us take one issue for example. Right to Life. I would imagine that most of us would quickly say yes of course abortion is wrong and that we need to do all that we can to bring an end to abortion. Unfortunately, many in our society, community and world strongly disagree. They profess the freedom of women to have control over their bodies to make the best decisions for themselves and their families. And soon the yelling begins and the signs come out and the division widens. We begin to debate freedom rather than the original point, Right to Life. The life of the child is often ignored in the debate, the voice of the voiceless is lost in the banter-ing. And then the issue of Right to Life is much greater than pro or against abortion. It is very evident that life is not cherished in our society not seen as the gift from God that it is. God created us in his image and likeness and if he created us he created everyone. So do we as a society have the right to put a person to death for a crime they committed? Do we have the right to allow children die of starvation in our country of such great wealth not to mention the thousands upon thousands who die across our world because they do not have the basics? Right to Life encompasses all life, from the racial slur that we say and believe or the judgement that we make upon a person without knowing them. Right to Life encompasses that willingness to live a greater truth and not just part of that truth. Yes, Abortion is terrible and needs to be stopped immediately but it will be difficult to eradicate from our society when life has such a low value, especially the life of another. The Kingdom of God calls us to see that Life is sacred and the most sacred life is not your own but the life of your brother and sister. We must come to value life, the good, the bad and the ugly so that we may live in the kingdom of God.

Fr. Larry McBride