

Did you notice a phrase that was repeated 3X times in today's gospel? It was a question, "*What should we do?*" The ancients felt that if one wants to emphasize the importance of something, you repeat it. For example, at every Mass we say, "*Holy, holy, holy Lord...*"

It is a very critical question and a basic human challenge and it is a question that occurs in everyday life in every age in everyone's life, "*What should I do?*"

The context of such a question obviously concerns Jesus and our decision making in every dimension of life – even in the very mundane of day to day life:

1. The dishwasher has finished and we are the first to discover it...*What should I do?*
2. The trashcan is now reaching the critical stage and no matter how much we put our foot to it, it will no longer smash down. *What should I do?*
3. Too much change is given back or they erred (in your favor) on the final cost. *What should I do?*

**And yet before we attempt to answer the question in ever expanding ways, we should first determine if we are truly willing to even ask Jesus such a question?**

Do we really want to ask, "*Not what I need Lord, but what do you need of me?*" To truly ask the question implies surrender in every facet of life; and it only starts with the dishwasher and emptying the trash!

If the truth be known, some of us really like our sins and we really do not want to give them up. You might respond by saying, "*That is crazy, of course we want to get rid of them!*" Well, let's see.

\*Suppose Jesus tells a husband, "*I am willing to take all of those attractions you might feel toward others outside of your wife. Would you like me to take it from you?*" I suspect the response of many would be "*Well, hmm...*"

\*I can ask that question, because I know how I have struggled with it. Would I really be willing to ask Jesus to take all the attractions I might feel? "*Take it all away? I'll get back to you on that one...*"

\*He might say to an alcoholic, "*I can give you a pill to take away that desire, would you like me to do so?*"

Yes, to be willing to ask Jesus: "*What should I do?*" will most certainly mean *profound changes*. Yet, when we are willing, it can be life changing.

+I was once invited to dinner by a couple who were involved in a rather structured prayer group consisting of other couples from various churches. All of these couples were there and in the course of our conversation a couple of them shared about past struggles in their marriages – rough spots, if you will. (I think that we can safely say that in any vocation there will be that!)

Well, they mentioned a particular priest who had helped them through it all and it was our very own Monsignor Mark Lane. (This happened independently of each other.) He presented to each couple a question that they should ask of one another and it was a question that changed everything.

The question he said they were to ask of one another was, "*What can I do for you?*" and to truly mean it when they asked it. And they truly did mean it and in doing so it changed everything in their marriage.

And that is the very gospel message today – do you want Jesus to change your lives and if so, are you willing to ask the question, "*What should I do, Jesus?*"

**John the Baptist** and **St. Paul** were two people who were willing to surrender their lives to such a question and when they did so, they were no longer in fear, but experienced the ultimate purpose of life.

For both of them, asking the question would eventually lead to their martyrdom.

\*John the Baptist didn't care if he ruffled Herod's feelings or anyone else for that matter, as he simply spoke the truth he had accepted.

\*And we have St. Paul singing out in today's reading: "*Rejoice! Again I say Rejoice!*" Do you know where he was while saying this? He was in a cold prison cell and certain death awaited him. And yet he was full of conviction and joy, because he had asked and surrendered his will to that question and Jesus' answer.

The theologian **Ronald Rolheiser** said that the **ability to ask and accept the answer to such question depends upon our spirituality.**

\*Some see one's spirituality as something equated with churchy stuff, but for him *it is a fire* bestowed on all people that can be used for good or bad, just as our gifts can do so as well (i.e., charisma of a saint or dictator).

\*For him, spirituality determines what we do with our desires.

**+Mother Teresa** may have looked frail and meek, but for those who stood in her way would certainly disagree. She was a human bulldozer totally dedicated to God and the poor. All considered her a saint, but why?

**Soren Kierkegaard** would say it was because *she willed the one thing*. She willed God, she willed the poor, she willed the answer to the question and that alone.

Most of us, said Rolheiser would like to be St. Paul's or Mother Teresa's, but the problem is that we **also** will *everything else*.

\*We want to be a saint, but not miss every sensation experienced by sinners.

\*We want purity but we also want experience all of life.

\*We want solitude but we do not want to miss anything.

\*We want to pray, but we also want watch *The Closer* or read *People Magazine* and the like.

To will the one thing - to marry one is not to marry others.

*"What Should I do?"* Ask that question and mean it and most certainly your life will never be the same.

For most, if not all, it will not mean martyrdom, but it most certainly will always mean - as St. Paul discovered - *Joy*. Ask the question and that will always be the answer and result - *Joy*.