From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Behind this Sunday's Second Reading is an interesting episode. A slave by the name of Onesimus escaped from his master, Philemon, and fled to St. Paul for safety. St. Paul was eager to protect the runaway slave, but he realized that something of highest value than the freedom of Onesimus was at stake. He was concerned that the master, Philemon, act as a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

St. Paul could easily have hidden Onesimus or even demanded in the name of Christ that Philemon grant him freedom. Instead St. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon, somewhat, we all imagine, to the slave's chagrin and the owner's surprise. With the slave, St. Paul sent a letter, part of which we have heard in the Mass this Sunday. The point of the letter is that St. Paul did not want to force virtue upon Philemon, that he wanted instead to invite him to be generous. Giving up a slave meant surrendering valuable property. It was a challenge for Philemon.

Actually, we are not sure how Philemon responded. Did he release his slave or not? Did Philemon perhaps remind St. Paul that slavery was legal and that he had a right to keep his slave? Did he complain that St. Paul really did not understand the economics of his situation and that his slave was necessary for his financial success? We do not know whether Philemon responded with the generosity which St. Paul expected of him as a disciple of Jesus.

What we do know is that as disciples of Jesus we are called to be generous in our response, not to live according to the minimum or to look for excuses for not being the kind of Catholics we should. In the Gospel Jesus warns us, through the example of building a tower and going to battle, that we have to be prepared for the Christian experience. Heaven is our promised inheritance, but that lies in the future. Mean while, here on earth we are expected to be faithful disciples who must hear and heed the words of Jesus.

Perhaps our cross is to endure the pain involved in giving up our own slavery to alcohol, tobacco or drugs. Our cross may be to embrace the discipline we need to overcome gossip, to forgive someone who has injured us gravely, or to be kind and thoughtful toward someone who drives us crazy.

God does not force us to be virtuous any more than St. Paul forced Philemon to give up his slave.

Even when bad things happen to us, God does not compel us to accept them as a cross. We have to make the effort to see that we can turn something awful into something valuable by joining our sufferings to those of Christ.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**September 9**	**11:00AM**
Maura Bernardino †		Lydia
Wed.	**September 10**	**11:00AM**
Nicolas Cachaper †		Jong & Alma
Thur.	**September 11**	**11:00AM**
Thanksgiving		Ed & Mae
Fri.	**September 12**	**11:00AM**
Paula & Family		Ed & Mae
Sat.	**September 13**	**4:30PM**
Alice Littleton †		Family
Sun.	**September 14**	**9:00AM**
Mary Lou Austria †		Olivia & Marvin
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of our Parish		

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