

Ordinary 22A - 2026

Your Place is Behind Jesus

One of the early church fathers, a man named Origen, suggested that when Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan," what he actually meant was, "Peter, your place is behind me, not in front of me. It's your job to follow me in the way I choose, not to try to lead me in the way YOU would like me to go." Certainly, what Jesus said immediately after his rebuke of Peter would support that interpretation. He told all of his disciples, including Peter, that not only did HE have a task that was set before him by God, but that THEY also had work to do. "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me," Jesus said. "Get on this new thrill ride with me. There will be many dangerous twists and turns in the tracks, but I promise you it will never be dull. It will mean putting someone other than yourself first, being concerned not so much with what YOU want, but what God wants for you. It won't be easy and sometimes it won't be much fun, but it will never be boring."

(by Johnny Dean from *Life on the Roller Coaster*)

Deeds Inspired by Love

Frederic Ozanam was a Frenchman whose life of only forty years ended in 1853. The France in which he lived remained torn as a result of the French Revolution in the late 1700's. The Roman Catholic Church had suffered the loss, not only of property and power, but of many lives, and its leadership had become reactionary. As a result, the Church, and even Christianity itself, was treated with distrust by the working class and with disdain by many intellectuals. Ozanam was in his late teens when he arrived at the University of Paris to study law. He was appalled to encounter there an atmosphere of bitter hostility to the Christian faith. With a number of his fellow students, he formed a study circle in order to present a positive intellectual witness to their faith. The group engaged in many debates and public controversies on behalf of Christianity. Then one day, a student threw at Ozanam this derisive challenge: "You Christians are fine at arguing, but what do you ever do?"

It was in that moment that young Frederic Ozanam was struck by a basic insight: Christianity is not about ideas, but about deeds inspired by love. His fine arguments were useless unless they were validated by how he lived his life. He resolved to start a fellowship of Christian lay people who would immerse themselves in the world of the poor and perform acts of service at personal sacrifice. This fellowship became the St. Vincent de Paul Society. In making this commitment, Frederic Ozanam died to himself. He picked up his cross, and followed after Jesus.

(by Charles Hoffacker from *An Invitation to Die*)

He's Going to Make It Hard on You

Bob Hodges, a Presbyterian minister in Rogersville, Tennessee, tells about duck hunting with a friend of his on Cherokee Lake in East Tennessee. His friend, Riley, who had just recently given his life to Christ, began to ask some serious questions about his Christian pilgrimage. Riley's old friends were making it very difficult for him to remain consistent in his obedience and commitment to Christ. They seemed to delight in trying to get him to fall back into the old patterns of life. They ridiculed him for spending so much time with "the preacher." Riley asked, "Why is it that I'm having more trouble since I became a Christian than I ever did when I was lost? Everything seems to go wrong. I'm having such a struggle!"

Bob Hodges spoke up, "I'll tell you why, Riley. A couple of ducks fly over and you shoot. You kill one and injure the other. They both fall into the lake. What do you do? You have to get out of the boat and go pick up the ducks, but which one do you go after first?" "Well," Riley drawled, "that's easy. I go after the injured one first. The dead one ain't goin' nowhere!" Hodges said, "And that's the way it is with the devil. He goes after injured Christians. He's not going to bother with the man dead in his sin. But the minute you give your life to Christ, you'd better get ready; the devil is going to come after you. He is going to chase you; he's going to make it hard on you." (by King Duncan, www.Sermons.com, adapted from Don Emmitte)

A Clay Pot

A clay pot sitting in the sun will always be a clay pot. It has to go through the white heat of the furnace to become porcelain. (by Mildred Witte Struven)