

Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time: Putting On Our Game Face

Did you ever hear the expression, *game face*? It is used in sports when an athlete is so determined to accomplish his or her goal, that his or her determination is written all over his or her face. You can just see it. Nothing was going to keep him from getting a hit, from making a tackle, from completing a pass, nothing is going to stop her from scoring a goal, from stopping a goal, and so forth.

In today's Gospel reading from *Luke*, Jesus has his game face on. The gospel begins, "When the days for Jesus' being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem." The actual words used is that Jesus *resolutely set his face* to go to Jerusalem. Some translations used to say "He set his face like flint," From this point on the *Gospel of Luke* is a journey narrative with the goal, Jerusalem, always in sight. For it is in Jerusalem that Jesus would suffer, die and rise again. He would be taken up, up to Calvary, up from the grave, up to heaven.

Nothing was going to get in Jesus' way. He was determined to complete the work of the Father. He was determined to initiate the Kingdom of God. If the Samaritans didn't want to join in, so be it. That would not stop him. Nor was he going to let those brats, James and John, slow him down with their desire to show that they could share in his power and call down fire and brimstone on the Samaritans. Jesus rebuked them, said something like, "Knock it off!" and then went on to the next stop, the next village on the journey to Jerusalem.

Some people wanted to join Jesus. He told them that he journey would be vigorous. "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." He is saying that this journey will not be easy.

Other people received a direct invitation from Jesus to join him on the journey. But they had excuses, "I've got to bury my father, I need to say goodbye to my family, and so forth." Jesus told them that nothing can prevent the true disciple from journeying with Him to Jerusalem, from journeying with Him to establish the Kingdom of God, from journeying with Him to the Cross, to the resurrection, to the Kingdom.

We also need to journey with the Lord. To do this, we need to have our game faces on. We cannot allow anything to destroy our focus on the goal, the Kingdom of God. That means we have to be determined to fight off the pressure we have from those around us enticing us to join in with the drinking, the drugs and the sex. That means telling people in high school, college and beyond, "No, I don't do that. I have a bigger goal in mind, a greater good." We need to firm ourselves up and resolutely set our faces to follow the Lord. I remember one young lady telling me how she survived the negative pressures of high school and college. Her name was Rachel. She would say, "What effect is doing this or not doing that going to have on Ten-Year-From-Now-Rachel." Nothing was going to stop her. Nor would she stop herself. She had her game face on. She had the determination of Joshua. When Joshua led the Hebrews into the Promise Land and after all their enemies were conquered, he told them to

choose God or choose the pagan idols, but, and this is Joshua 24:15 “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Game face.

Now, not everyone can hit a home run, no matter how determined he or she is. Some people just cannot hit a baseball or softball even if it were the size of a beach ball. That would be me. Not everyone can score a goal for the USA Women’s team, or block one, no matter how determined she is. There are many, many young ladies who are great soccer players, but not good enough to make the national team. Not everyone can become a nurse or a doctor no matter his or her determination. Some people just cannot do science and math and could never get into med school or nursing school. Not everyone can be a teacher. Some people just do not have the patience to care for a large number of children while at the same time teach them. Not everyone can set their face to achieve every goal.

But everyone can become a vital member of the Kingdom of God. Everyone can be resolutely determined to join Jesus all the way, all the way to calvary, all the way to the Kingdom. Every one of us can harness the power of God, the power of the Spirit, and complete the monumental task we have been created to perform. We can do all that God wants of us in our lives, but we have to be determined, we have to set our faces like flint and look towards the ultimate goal of our lives, service of God.

When it comes to living our Christianity, we have to have our game faces on.