

**Reflection on the Gospel-13th Sunday on Ordinary Time A
(Matthew 10:37-42)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

What price are we prepared to pay to create a just, equitable and healthy planetary community? That question is at the heart of today's gospel reading. That was, in essence, the question that Jesus of Nazareth put to his disciples and the question that Matthew put to his community some sixty years after Jesus' death. We seem to be at a turning point in world history, with a climate crisis, a pandemic that has claimed the lives of some 410,000 people and a new consciousness of the discrimination and violence experienced by people of colour. What price are we prepared to pay to change the way we live so that black lives matter to everyone without exception and so that we might meet the needs of everyone within the means of the planet? We might learn from the witness of the hundreds of medical professionals who have died from Covid-19 contracted from their patients. Last week, I spent time with the photos in the Guardian of some of these courageous people and read a list of their names. I wanted to drink in the spirit of generosity that permitted them to take up their respective "crosses" and lay down their lives for suffering others.

Today's gospel reading brings to a close the so-called missionary discourse in which Jesus instructs his disciples on what it means to be a disciple. While some of the nuances of those instructions are lost in translation, Jesus' words to the disciples can still speak to us as contemporary disciples. In following the way of Jesus and living the gospel of truth and justice and compassion, we can be faced with excruciating choices. We cannot always satisfy family if we want to be true to what we believe or if we want to expose injustice and dishonesty: there is often a deeper commitment that transcends the bonds of family relationship. We may even be called to relinquish, for the sake of a greater good, work that we love or income on which we depend. In other words, there is deep suffering in the way of discipleship, suffering that comes from being true to a mission that brings life to others despite the cost to ourselves.

Taking up the cross is a powerful metaphor for being willing to endure whatever hardships are involved in realising the vision of God's empire as opposed to the brutal empire of "Rome". God's empire finds expression in our times in every attempt to enshrine just policies and practices in law. It finds expression in every attempt to free the most marginalised from the impact of unjust policies and practices. Words are not enough: we are to live out in our lives the pattern of Jesus' life, a life characterised by hospitality or welcome and attention to the vulnerable. A cup of cold water for "the little ones" becomes the emblem of discipleship and in our post-industrial times the little ones include all God's thirsty creatures, human and other-than-human.