

May 16, 2008
Friday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Readings of the day may be found on the following link:

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab>

James 2:14-24, 26

Psalm 112:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Mark 8:34-9:1

Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

There are times when I want to say, "enough already." The cross seems as heavy as it can get. Yet, I know that I am just feeling sorry for myself, wanting life to be easy. There is a story about a Zen master who said that there were three kind of disciples: ones who want to impart wisdom, those who want to maintain temples and shrines, and those who want to look good to others. Another Zen master expressed the same idea. While a student, he was studying under a teacher who was very severe and occasionally beat him. Many of his students quit, while he remained. Looking back on this experience he said, "A poor disciple uses his teacher's influence. A fair disciple admires his teacher's kindness. A good disciple grows strong under his teacher's discipline." I do not see Jesus as an unkind, demanding master--quite the contrary. However, I find truth in this story as it relates to my spiritual life. It is easy to petition God when life presents struggles; it is easy to express gratitude when all is going well. But to remain steadfast in the midst of difficulty, pain, and loss is to carry the cross with grace and allow it to change me. For me that is the challenge and the invitation of this gospel.

Where in my life am I experiencing struggles?
How am I responding to them? Am I losing hope or growing in faith?
What attitudes and behaviors do I need to change?
What is my pray at this time?
Can I accept the sadness?
Can I let go of my own dream of how life ought to be and discover God in the struggle?

Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase.
Martin Luther King Jr.