

11TH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A – 18 JUNE 2023

It is probably is not a good idea to ask a close relative or friend to help you to learn to drive a car. I have painful memories of the time, many years ago, when my father tried to persuade my mother to learn to drive, a prospect she didn't relish. What confirmed her in this conviction was the experience, one Sunday afternoon, of allowing my father to sit in as she drove along some country lanes. Dad continually barked out instructions and even on a few occasions grabbed the steering wheel out of her hands. Observing from the back seat, my sister and I winced with pain as we witnessed the scene before us. Inevitably it all ended in tears !

Perhaps one of the hardest things there is, is to allow someone we love to make their own mistakes. To give them responsibility, and allow them to use it. Everything within us wants to intervene, to control, take charge, because we know we can do it well - better, indeed, than the person we have given the task to. It's very hard to let go, to stand back, to let someone else do things in their own way. Any parent will know very well what I am talking about.

In life, we often need to delegate jobs to other people because we simply do not have time or energy to do it all. Everything may not be done in our own way - but it is done. Yet, often we would like to do everything ourselves, and very often we try to, because we want it done *just so*.

We heard in today's gospel how Our Lord commissioned twelve, flawed and frail men as his disciples. He knows they have human failings and fragile lives, but he chooses them for who they are. Their willingness to respond, to follow his call, was far more important than any personal worthiness.

Matthew begins today's gospel by telling us how Jesus saw the crowds and felt sorry for them. This incredible compassion, the immense love of Jesus, may have helped them to shift the focus from their own human weakness to rely on God's love and strength.

Appreciating God's love and relying on his strength, rather than our own, takes time.

We still have to struggle, still have to try to overcome sin and conquer our weakness. But not in order to earn God's love. Rather, to show that we are trying to be worthy of the trust he has placed in us. The Lord asks us to do a remarkable thing - to co-operate with him in building up his kingdom on this earth. that means not merely talking about Jesus as though he'd asked us to be part of some marketing campaign. It means actually being him, being his presence in the world. Jesus asks us to be his body, that is, to be the way he walks, heals, speaks, challenges, and is present in our world in the year 2023. We pray that we may respond to this call with faith and generosity.