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“God is the one who ... works in you both to desire and to work” (Phil 2:13).

[Phil 2:12-18](#); [Luke 14:25-33](#)

The first challenge a leader faces in any mass movement is to keep the mission clearly on the shoulders of his followers instead of letting them focus exclusively on him. Jesus was intent on transferring everything to his disciples, who were to carry out his ministry after his departure with the same empowering Spirit that had animated him.

A key scene in this transfer was when angels chided the apostles for standing and looking up at the sky after Jesus' Ascension. They were not to enshrine him or wait for his return, but resume his mission in the world, where Jesus had already gone ahead of them to Galilee and beyond.

The church lost some of this emphasis and energy when later Christians began shifting their focus from imitating Jesus to worshipping him. We face this same temptation today by enshrining Jesus in sanctuaries and in our devotional practices instead of becoming other Christs in the world.

In today's Gospel, Jesus senses the growing dependence of the crowds following him because of his preaching and miracles. He was the strong leader, and they were his fans. So, Jesus turns and confronts them with the demands of discipleship. If they want to follow him, they must imitate him, making the mission more important than all other loyalties, including family. They must shoulder their own burdens as he was doing. The two short parables about builders and kings were lessons about knowing what is required to complete the challenges of discipleship.

St. Paul also tried to prepare his fellow workers for his own departure by reminding them that it was God, not Paul, who inspired them to embrace the paschal pattern of Jesus' death and resurrection. Their relationship with God in Jesus had to be a direct and intimate, not second-hand faith.

Strong leaders, in faith or politics, must be team builders and delegators if the movement is to grow. Charismatic founders can overshadow others and fail to transfer power. Jesus was intent on inspiring "full, conscious, active participation" by all believers. These words from Vatican II's "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" describe a church fully incorporated into the body of Christ, whose Spirit animates every baptized person to share in the ministry of the Gospel.

We reach maturity as Christians by developing all our gifts for the service of others by imitating Jesus' self-sacrificing love. People who serve come alive, enriched by the networks of relationships with other people inspired by visions larger than

themselves. “The glory of God,” wrote St. Irenaeus, “is a human being fully alive.” This was the example Jesus set, then called to us, “Come, follow me.”

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