Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“We have given up everything and followed you." (Mark 10:28).

Sir 35:1-12; *Mk 10:28-31*

Many years ago, when I was teaching high school in Chicago, I was an avid reader of columnist Mike Royko, a city fixture and humorist who kept track of Mayor Richard Daley, whose political machine ran the city. Daley shamelessly once defended awarding a big insurance contract to a close friend with the statement, “What do you expect me to do; give it to strangers?”

Royko designed an official seal for the city with the motto Ubi Mea? - Latin for “Where’s mine?” His columns attacking blatant self-interest in a city known for corruption might have illustrated today’s Gospel story when Peter asks Jesus, “What about us; what do we get?”

The Apostles are often depicted discussing their own ambitions or arguing over who will be the greatest when Jesus comes into power. So, it is no surprise that Peter spoke for all of them when he listed all the sacrifices they had made to follow Jesus. They wanted to know what they would get in return.

Jesus lays it on thick. For giving up houses, land, parents and family, the Apostles would receive one hundredfold of these good things, plus eternal life. Jesus then adds, “Not without persecution.”

This exchange about quid pro quo expectations seems out of place in the Gospels, where earthly reward was rarely part of being called to follow Jesus. Disciples weren’t supposed to look back. They must lose their lives for the sake of the Gospel. They are told to pick up their crosses and follow Jesus without counting the cost.

Could it be that Jesus was telling them a joke to bring them back to reality from their dreams of earthly glory and self-importance? Yes, they would get everything they had given up "one hundred times over!" Instead of their own families, they would be responsible for large communities. Instead of their own land and fortune, they would be put in charge of the needs and resources of the churches they led. Instead of personal relationships, they would be called to love everyone.

This description sounds a lot like many pastors and missionaries, who devote themselves to caring for others at great personal sacrifice. It also describes religious sisters, brothers and laity who serve the poor, and many others who give up careers and comfort to work for justice in society. They have no illusions about the cost of discipleship and surely know they need a sense of humor to keep going in lives of

service.

On this second day after Pentecost, we are all reminded of the demands of being with Jesus. We are also invited to see how living for others is the best path to real joy and a challenging call that is rich with purpose and integrity.