

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

*WHOEVER LOVES FATHER OR MOTHER MORE
THAN ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME*

1. PRAYER

God of surprises, we come holding tightly to our plans, our people, and our version of how life should go. Loosen our grip. Not because these things don't matter, but because you can point us to what matters more. Give us the courage to follow the path of love even when we don't know where we're going. Amen.

2. SHARING YOUR STORY

Think of someone you love deeply. Share a time when one of you sacrificed something significant for that relationship.

3. STORIES AROUND THE GLOBE

James visits the Cathedral

James Pawlowicz arrived in Brazil later than planned. His visa was delayed, his cohort had already settled in, and when he finally got there, his Portuguese wasn't quite ready for real life. He ordered the wrong food. He wandered into a two-hour Lenten service expecting a thirty-minute Mass, and ended up at the altar receiving an anointing of oil he didn't see coming.

He could have been rattled. Instead, he reflected: "Did I know what was happening? No. Did I go forward? You bet."

James is a new Maryknoll lay missionary, and he is learning something that every missionary eventually learns: the call is not a plan. It is an invitation to follow. The delays, the miscommunications, the unexpected anointings; these are not obstacles to the mission. They are the mission.

James says the experience helped him realize what really matters, "God has reminded me that his invitation was and is to follow him. Nothing more, nothing less. So I continue to look, listen, and follow, knowing that God will work all things for good."

That is what losing your life for his sake looks like in practice.

(*Going Forward* by James Pawlowicz, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, March 11, 2026)

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4. GOSPEL STORY

Jesus said to his apostles: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. "

"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.

And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple— amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward." Matthew 10:37-42

5. REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

Now more than ever, it is easy to become attached to things that pull us away from God and from each other. We wake up and reach for our phones before we've said a word to anyone. We fill small moments by scrolling instead of seeing, and block out the beauty of human connection without even realizing it.

But our attachments go deeper than screens. We become attached to our vision of how life should go, where we should be by now, and what success is supposed to look like. When life doesn't match that picture, we grieve the life we expected rather than the one in front of us.

Jesus is asking us to look honestly at what sits at the center. Is there a person, a possession, or a plan we value more than God? We are not called to love others less. We are called to love more. When God is at the center, we are freed to love everyone else more boldly, more honestly, more sacrificially.

James didn't get the mission he planned. He got something better because he stayed open. That is what trusting God looks like in practice. Let yourself be surprised.

6. FAITH SHARING

Is there someone or something that is more important than God in your life? Has there ever been a time in which this has been the case?

7. GO FORTH

This week, take time to write down your top ten priorities, such as the people, possessions, and plans that occupy your time, energy, and worry. Be honest. Then look at your list. Where is God? Now rewrite the list the way you wish it looked. Pray over the gap between the two.

8. PRAYER

Loving God, you ask us to follow without always knowing where we're going. That is not easy. We come holding our plans, our loves, our carefully constructed lives. We don't want to let go. Teach us to hold everything more loosely, not because it doesn't matter, but because you matter more, and because your path of love has surprised us before. Send us forward with open hands. Amen.