



St Joseph's Theological Institute - Cedara

(Association Incorporated Under Section 21)

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At first glance our Gospel passage seems more suitable for a closing celebration than it is for the opening of a new academic year. But on further reflection we can discern a very useful principle that can assist us as we launch ourselves into the 2011 academic year. What Jesus is saying in essence is that we need to be single-minded about what we do and that we need to stay focussed. The journey ahead is not an easy one and we will do well to get rid of unnecessary baggage.

The start of a new year presents us with many opportunities. Opportunities to rectify the errors of the past and to move ahead with renewed vigour. Often this calls for the making or the revision of our resolutions. Resolutions to become more prayerfully reflective and less gregarious are always welcome in a community of students as are resolutions in the direction of healthier lifestyles. Perhaps the greatest resolution a student can make is a decision to read more. And so, the opportunities are numerous.

A most meaningful resolution is a resolution to learn to ask the right questions. Far too many wrong conclusions are reached simply because we are asking the wrong questions. One glaring example of the wrong question in present day South Africa is whether a certain action is safe or unsafe – not whether it is right or wrong, but whether it is safe or unsafe. In other words, will I be found out or will I get away with it? And if I can get away with it, then why not? Besides everybody is doing it. Five million people said yes to apartheid but that did not make it right. We need to learn to ask the right questions – questions that will rescue us from the moral bankruptcy which we find around us.

Another wrong notion is that we are here to prepare ourselves for ministry. To some extent that is correct but it is not the whole story. We have to realise that our very being here is itself a ministry. This is the Church's Education ministry and students participate in it no less than the staff members do. Teaching and learning do not occur some sort of limbo that we occupy while waiting to be assigned to some parish or other pastoral agency. Teaching and learning are in fact an active engagement with life. Like all other ministry, the Teaching-Learning scenario has formative dimensions and these we must pay attention to. The point in all this is that we have to immerse ourselves as fully as we can in whatever we are called to do at this time. In other words we need to be single minded, focussed and dedicated. In this sense the Gospel passage is just as relevant to the start of our academic year as it is to the closing liturgy when we send out candidates for mission.

May our engagement with the Teaching and Learning that goes on here bear much fruit in our lives.