

Last month the Louisville Slugger museum in Kentucky put up new billboards to try to boost their attendance. The museum is dedicated to a famous baseball bat. Marketers decided on a lighthearted slogan for the billboards, and this is what they came up with: "More old bats than a needlepoint convention." What they didn't realize is that there really is a needlepoint convention and the organizers were not amused. They weren't going to let anyone stereotype the membership. So tiny as they were, they complained against the famous museum, and the museum gave in. Now the billboards just say, "Come see old bats," and there's no reference to knitting.

This is an example of commitment. It surprised people how strong a stand the knitters organization would take to defend the integrity of its membership. But that's what you do when you are committed to a cause. You take on big organizations because their size is small compared to the size of your commitment.

When Jesus began his preaching, the size of the organization was small, but he wanted a big commitment. Some people who associate with a cause have the ability to commit to it. Others do not. Some people followed Jesus around as they would an entertainer. Jesus also challenges the people who commit too much. Calculate the cost, he says. If you're going to build a tower, check your resources first. If you're going to war, find out the size of your enemy's army. If you're going to be a disciple, know what you're getting into. And what you're getting into is a cross.

Today's gospel offers Christians two pieces of advice: Get involved, but calculate the cost.

In this parish, a lot of people get involved. We have liturgical ministers like readers, communion ministers, servers, song leaders and ushers. We have catechetical ministers in the school of religion, confirmation preparation, and vacation bible school. We have people who bring prayer and communion to nursing homes, the prison, and the hospital. We have leaders serving on councils and committees. And for any event, there are people who open up, set up, clean up, straighten up, and lock up. There is always more we can do, but there is a lot going on.

As they discovered at a museum in Louisville, if you are committed to a cause, nothing will get in your way. Whether you are involved at church, in the community, or at home, whenever you serve others, you take up the cross of discipleship. Our involvements show where our commitments are and how strong they are.