Rally Day marks the beginning of not just Sunday School, but the entire program year in many congregations. In that context, Jesus' words in this week's "Lectionary 23" Gospel, Luke 14:25-33, may give you pause for thought!

Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

"Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace.

"So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

Questions for Discussion

Obviously Jesus was exaggerating. He doesn't really expect us to actually hate our families or to get rid of all our possessions. But he does want us to know that discipleship means another set of allegiances and a different set of priorities. So, what would change in this regard if you were to get serious about living like one of Jesus' disciples?

In Jesus' day, talk about "carrying a cross" would have seemed shocking, maybe even obscene. In our day, are there any images for our style of living which would seem equally as startling or offensive?

Building construction and military service are two occupations which obviously require considerable forethought and planning. Do Jesus' challenges have any implications for your work-a-day world? What if you are un(der)employed? Or retired?