

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 21, 2016—They come from every corner of the globe and prepare for years for that one competition where they must be at their best. They face opponents as skilled or better than they are, and yet go headlong into the fight focused on their goals. The Olympic athletes, whom we have been watching these past few weeks, have captured the attention of the planet and have us all riveted on the Games that bring the best to battle for that place on the top stand and a Gold Medal win.

From the world's most decorated swimmer named Michael Phelps, to the exuberant yet tiny gymnast Simone Biles, to the ever-speedy runner named Tori Bowie, these talents and their athletic prowess and perfect performances inspire us all. But, we should note that, these Gold Medal moments and the success that they bring did not happen just because these athletes showed up in Rio de Janeiro (or at any other national or worldwide competition). These stunning athletic feats are the result of thousands of hours of practice, years of discipline in every way, razor sharp focus, and determination that lands them a victory that places them in the pages of athletic history forever.

The Gospel this weekend [Luke 13:22-30] and, in fact, our entire faith and its daily practice is very similar. This familiar parable told by the Divine Master reminds us that, just like these Olympic champions, we too, must focus daily on living our faith so that when judgment day arrives for us we will be welcomed to the feast because we have been faithful to the calling that is ours. But, if we spend our days and years busy about other things and not attending to the practice and living of the faith that we have been given, then the "gold medal" of a heavenly home cannot be ours, for the preparations have not been made and the final run—or test—will not have been achieved.

My friends, as these 2016 Summer Olympics conclude with impressive victories, with stories of teamwork and kindness, and with thousands returning home to begin practicing for the next round of Games, let us be ever mindful that we, too, are in a race—the race of a life of faith lived well here so that one day can be a victory of life with HIM forever.

God love you.