

I've told you about my brief Marine Corps career. During my freshman year at WSU I signed a contract to go to Officer Candidate School the following summer. But by the time spring rolled around I wasn't that interested in joining the Marines – but I had signed the contract, so I went. Shortly before leaving for Camp Upshur the recruiting officer had us take the military oath. “I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.”

This was a little weird for me. I hadn't thought about taking an oath as part of the deal. What I remember thinking was, “I might not be taking this seriously anymore, but they are.” I realized that I had just taken a step and assumed an identity as a Private in the Marine Corps

Reserve that changed things. I was now living under a new set of expectations with consequences.

Many of us have made even more serious promises. At my ordination I promised the Archbishop in front of a whole cathedral and God Himself to consecrate my life ever more fully to God, celebrate the sacraments faithfully, to pray the office, preach the gospel, and explain the faith. I know many of you stood in front of your friends and family and vowed to your spouse and God Himself to be faithful in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, all the days of your life.

I mention these promises and vows in light of our second reading today from I Timothy. Paul writes to Timothy, “Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the *noble confession* in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you before . . . Jesus Christ, who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the *noble confession*, to keep the commandment without stain or reproach.” This “Noble Confession” Paul speaks of is the public witness

of our faith and baptism. Think of the Creed we profess at every mass, or those masses when we have baptisms. Instead of the Creed, we all renew our baptismal promises. We make our own noble confession like Timothy. Do we realize what we're doing – or are we like that younger me, becoming a Marine almost without thinking?

Today I want to reflect upon how we are living out the new expectations and duties that come from our noble confession of faith, especially regarding a theme in our other readings today. In the first reading Prophet Amos warns the People of God in the face of their idolatry and injustice to the poor, "Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts: Woe to the complacent in Zion, Lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches." And in the Gospel, we have a similar case of the complacency of the rich in the presence of the poor when the Rich Man ignores or doesn't even notice the Poor Man Lazarus.

In our state of life as baptized Catholic Christians, have we become just as complacent in our duties and the expectations God has

for us – that we took on by the noble confession of faith we have each made? Being complacent means getting too comfortable, becoming numbed by routine and lowered expectations. In terms of our Discipleship what does that complacency look like?

I think most of know we are obligated to come to mass and worship God every Sunday (whether we do it or not is another matter). But the truth is that going to mass every Sunday – even if we do it – is not enough to live out our noble confession worthily. We must do more to compete well for the faith and lay hold of eternal life, as Paul writes. Think about your life: do you show up on the Holy Family campus any time during the week beyond Sunday mass? Are you involved in any other volunteer ministry, or class, or program? Do you have a sustained prayer life beyond mass, grace at meals, and a quick prayer at bedtime? It's easy for us to slip into thinking that if I check off the Sunday mass box, then I'm a good Catholic and I'm doing all God expects of me. But

that is complacent thinking. The bar is much higher, and opportunities are much richer than that.

Here are some ways to go deeper with Jesus. Speaking of Lazarus and the poor, our St. Vincent de Paul Society is looking for new members today after mass. What about joining and directly helping the modern day Lazaruses with them? And The New Bethlehem Center is always looking for more volunteers.

But there also other opportunities to live out our baptism promises more fully. We are celebrating another Mercy Night this Friday evening. Come and take time to pray and be prayed for, to meditate with the Eucharist or go to confession. It's not too late to join the Monday Bible Study or the Alpha program that started this week. Volunteer to serve at the Café or Welcoming ministry. There are so many ways to stretch and grow in Christ here.

As I vaguely sensed when I took that oath to defend the country, oaths are serious things, whether on the occasion of a marriage,

ordination, or baptism. They offer a chance of great happiness at the cost of great commitment. We're all called to witness to the world just as our King Jesus did before Pontius Pilate. We're all called to make and fulfill a noble confession just as He did. We are all Timothy. Are we being faithful to our vows and promises to God?