

Lately I've become a big fan of a few TV shows: *Antiques Roadshow* on PBS. And sometimes right after *Antiques Roadshow*, there's a newer show called *Market Warriors*. This summer, my brother introduced me to some similar cable shows: *Pickers* and *Storage Wars*. There are also a couple of shows that follow what happens at pawn shops - *Pawn Stars* - I think is the title ... and there's a second one based out of Louisiana ... the name escapes me.

In all of these shows, people are either trying to figure out if some old thing they own or that they found at a garage sale has any financial value. In a couple of those shows, the people involved are looking to buy things to flip at auction - flipping, if you aren't familiar with the term, is to buy something at a low price and then sell it for more than you paid. People flip antiques, cars, and houses.

In all of these shows, the idea is to undercut the seller by intense haggling or schmoozing ... find a great deal ... and hope that someone will pay more for whatever is up for sale.

In a secularized world ... and in a consumer society ... there is sometimes the temptation to view everything in terms of profit and loss. Sometimes we can attempt to apply those ideas to even spiritual things.

75 years ago, Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a book titled *The Cost of Discipleship*. In it, he spoke out against the secularization ... now we might say consumerization ... of Christianity ... the Church ... and of grace.

Bonhoeffer speaks of two kinds of grace - the first is what he calls "cheap" grace ... and the second he calls "costly" grace.

In defining "cheap" grace, Bonhoeffer says:

*Cheap grace means grace sold on the marketplace ... a system ... Cheap grace ... amounts to a denial of the living Word of God ... a denial of the Incarnation ... Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves ... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.*

In today's Gospel, we hear the story about the widow's mite - the two small coins given to the Temple treasury by a poor widow. Those two coins were worth about one penny ... in the eyes of the world, they amounted to very little ... there was very little financial value ... but that in the eyes of that poor woman ... and in the eyes of God ... and in the eyes of Our Lord ... those two coins amounted to everything she possessed ... what in reality was a tremendous sacrifice ... a total gift of self.

And as we continue our weekly readings from the Letter to the Hebrews, we again hear about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ... who in His own flesh ... and in

His own blood ... became for us the true Sacrifice ... and we are reminded that the Word (Jesus) became flesh ... *“to take away [our] sin by his sacrifice.”*

This is no trivial matter. Rather, Jesus demonstrates for us the supreme and ultimate example of a sacrifice ... the one true sacrifice which brings about infinite grace - grace that we can apply in our lives ... grace that can really save us - powerful grace that can truly transform us ... this is the grace that Boenhoffer speaks of when he talks about “costly grace.” Which Boenhoffer defines like this:

*Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field, for the sake of it [we] will gladly go and sell all that [we have] ... It is the pearl of great price ... it is the [kingdom] of Christ ... it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.*

*Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which [we all] must knock.*

*Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it cost a ... life, and it is grace because it gives ... the only true life. ... Above all it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son ... and what has cost God [so] much cannot be cheap for us.*

*Costly grace is the Incarnation of God ... Costly grace is the sanctuary of God ... the living word, the Word of God ... Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus ... Grace is costly because it compels [us] to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us place our entire selves at the service of Christ. We cannot be looking for a spiritual bargain or a theological deal. Rather, we need to be willing to sacrifice whatever may be holding us back from embracing total discipleship ... whatever stands in our way of truly following Jesus Christ ... the Way, the Truth, and the Life ... in every aspect of our lives, every moment of the day, and in every thought we have ... every breath we breathe. Let us pray to see with new eyes the surpassing value of our salvation - and calculating the immense cost of so rich a gift - desire to receive it ... no matter the price.

Only then can we be united in all things with the Most Holy Trinity ... and truly live out our baptismal call to be sons and daughters of God the Father, redeemed in the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and filled with the manifold graces of the Holy Spirit.