

Monday 15th in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 10,34--11,1): Jesus said to his disciples, «Do not think that I have come to establish peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and daughter against her mother; a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Each one will have as enemies those of one's own family.

»Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take up his cross and come after me is not worthy of me. One who wants to benefit from his life will lose it; one who loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me. The one who welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive the reward of a prophet; the one who welcomes a just man because he is a just man will receive the reward of a just man. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is a disciple of mine, I assure you, he will not go unrewarded».

When Jesus had finished giving his twelve disciples these instructions, He went on from there to teach and to proclaim his message in their towns.

«Whoever does not take up his cross and come after me is not worthy of me»

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Today, Jesus offers us an explosive mixture of recommendations; it is like one those

fashionable banquets where the dishes are just tiny little tasty “snacks”. This is a hard to swallow sound and profound advice addressed to his disciples in their mid missionary preparation and formation process (Mt 11:1). We have to fragment the text in separate blocks to better taste them.

Jesus starts by explaining them the effect of his teachings. Beyond the positive and evident consequences of our Lord's behavior, the Gospel evokes the hindrances and secondary effects of their preaching: «Each one will have as enemies those of one's own family» (Mt 10:36). This is the paradoxical result of living the Faith: the eventual likelihood of having to confront even our closest relatives, when we do not understand who the Lord Jesus is and we do not perceive him as the Master of Communion.

Secondly, Jesus requests us to place him at the highest level of our esteem: «Whoever loves father or mother more than me...» (Mt 10:37), «And whoever loves son or daughter more than me...» (Mt 10:37). In this way, He proposes us to let him join us as the presence of God, for «whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me» (Mt 10:40). Living with the Lord, when we welcome Him at home, is to enjoy the reward of the prophets and the just men, for we have welcome a prophet and a just man.

The Master's recommendation ends when He values our small gestures of help and support to those living with the Lord, his disciples, which are all the Christians. «And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is a disciple of mine...» (Mt 10:42). From this advice a responsibility is born: when we deal with our fellow men, we should be conscientious that he who lives with the Lord, whoever he may be, must be treated as we should treat him. St. John Crysostom says: «If love would be spread all over, an infinite goodness would be born out of it».