

Monday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 10:34—11:1): Jesus said to his Apostles: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s enemies will be those of his household.

“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 follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple— amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.” When Jesus finished giving these commands to his Twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns.

“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me”

Fr. Valentí ALONSO i Roig
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Jesus offers us an explosive mixture of recommendations; it is like one of those fashionable banquets where the dishes are just tiny little tasty ‘snacks’. These are profound and hard to take in advice, addressed to his disciples in their mid-missionary preparation and formation process (cf Mt 11:1). We have to fragment the text in separate blocks to better taste them.

Jesus starts by explaining to 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: “and one’s enemies will be those of his household” (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 that we 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 propose to us to let him join us as the presence of God, for “whoever receives me receives the one 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 welcomed 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 whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple...” (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 Chrysostom says: “If love would be spread all over, an infinite goodness would be born out of it.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“While peace arrives - when we will have no enemy - our aim is to fight long, faithfully and bravely, to deserve to be crowned by the Lord God.” (Saint Augustine)

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“The Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, shared until his martyrdom her Son Jesus' fight with the Devil. Let us invoke her motherly intercession so that she may help us always to be witnesses of Christ's peace and never to sink so low as to make compromises with evil.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us. ‘By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man’ (Vatican II). We are called only to become one with him (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N° 521)