Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 10:37-42): Jesus said to his apostles: "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 a righteous man 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 the little one is a disciple— amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"

Fr. Benedito CAPITANGO
(Luanda, Angola)

Today, the Gospel confronts us with a decisive truth: Christ does not want to occupy just a place in our lives; He wants to be the center of our lives. That is why He says: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:37). Jesus did not come to become one interest among many others, nor to be an occasional reference point in certain moments of life.

At the same time, it is not acceptable for Him to be seen as just another aspect of our life, for He is its foundation, its meaning, and its destiny. The true disciple does not fit Christ into his life; he builds his life around Christ. Elsewhere, Jesus adds: "What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mt 16:26).

The cross that every disciple must take up (cf. Mt 10:38) represents Christ's own path. Carrying the cross does not mean seeking suffering, but remaining faithful to the Lord when living the Gospel comes at a cost. Whoever follows Christ is already walking the road that leads to the Resurrection. In this way, Jesus teaches us that authentic love has a proper order: it is not a matter of loving our family less, but of loving everyone from God and in God. Saint Augustine of Hippo said, "Love, and do what you will." When God holds first place, everything else finds its proper balance. Moreover, Christ does not command us to abandon those we love, but to choose God's truth whenever human affections try to draw us away from it.

The Lord concludes with a promise: "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones

will surely not lose his reward” (Mt 10:42). Nothing we do for Christ will be forgotten. At the final judgment, what will matter is not who accumulated the most possessions, but who loved the most. For this reason, the teaching of Pope Leo XIV at the beginning of his pontificate resonates powerfully: “This is the hour for love! The heart of the Gospel is the love of God that makes us brothers and sisters.” May the Lord grant us a free and generous heart, so that we may love Him above all things. Amen.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Through pains and wounds and favors, God forms His children for eternal life" (Saint Gregory the Great)

- "So often in countless ways we are asked to compromise our faith, to water down the radical demands of the Gospel and to conform to the spirit of this age. Yet the martyrs call out to us to put Christ first" (Francis)

- "(...) It is necessary to convince oneself that the primary vocation of the Christian is to follow Jesus (cf. Mt 16,25) (...)" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2.232)

Other comments

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

Fr. Antoni POU OSB Monk of Montserrat
(Montserrat, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, upon listening to Jesus' words, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...” (Mt 10,37), we are puzzled. However, as we delve deeper, we realize the lesson the Lord wants to convey: for Christians, the only absolute is God and His Kingdom. Everyone must discover their vocation - possibly the most delicate task of all - and faithfully follow it. If a Christian man or woman has a marital vocation, they should realize that fulfilling their vocation consists in loving their family as Christ loves the Church.

The vocation to religious life or priesthood asks not to put family ties before those of faith, as long as we do not fail to meet the basic requirements of Christian charity. Family ties cannot enslave and stifle the vocation to which we are called. Behind the word "love" can hide a possessive desire for the other that takes away their freedom to develop their human and Christian life; or the fear of leaving the family nest and facing the demands of life and Jesus' call to follow him. It is this distortion of love that Jesus asks us to transform into a free and generous love, because, as Saint Augustine says, "Christ has come to transform love."

Love and hospitality will always be at the core of the Christian life, towards everyone and, above all, towards our family members, because they are usually the closest and also constitute the "neighbor" that Jesus asks us to love. In welcoming others, there is always the welcoming of Christ: “Whoever receives you receives me” (Mt 11,40). Therefore, we must see Christ in those we serve, and also recognize Christ the servant in those who serve us.