

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”

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Today, Jesus offers us an explosive mix of recommendations; it's like one of those fashionable banquets where the dishes are small appetizers to be savored. This is profound and difficult-to-digest advice, intended for his disciples at the heart of their missionary formation and preparation (cf. Mt 11:1). To savor them, we must contemplate the text in separate sections.

Jesus begins by revealing the effect of his teaching. Beyond the positive effects, evident in the Lord's actions, the Gospel evokes the setbacks and side effects of preaching: "One’s enemies will be those of his household" (Mt 10:36). This is the paradox of living the faith: the possibility of clashing, even with those

closest to us, when we do not understand who Jesus the Lord is, and do not perceive him as the Master of communion.

Secondly, Jesus asks us to occupy the highest level on the scale of love: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me..." (Mt 10:37), "Whoever loves son or daughter more than me..." (Mt 10:37). Thus, He invites us to allow ourselves to be accompanied by Him as the presence of God, since "whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (Mt 10:40). The effect of living accompanied by the Lord, welcomed into our home, is to enjoy the reward of the prophets and the righteous, because we have welcomed a prophet and a righteous man.

The Master's recommendation ends by valuing the small gestures of help and support for those who live accompanied by the Lord, his disciples, which we all Christians are. "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 arises a responsibility: regarding our neighbor, we must be aware that whoever lives with the Lord, whoever they may be, must be treated as we would treat Him. Saint John Chrysostom says: "If love were scattered everywhere, an infinity of goods would be born from it."

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "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)
- "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)
- "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^o 521)