

Wednesday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 14:25-33): Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, “If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’ Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

«Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple»

Fr. Joan GUITERAS i Vilanova
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we can contemplate Jesus on his way towards Jerusalem. There, He will offer his life for the salvation of our world. “Great crowds were traveling with Jesus” (Lk 14:25): the disciples, walking with Jesus, who precedes them, must learn to become new men. This is the final purpose of the instructions the Lord, in his ascent to the

“City of peace”, exposes and proposes to those following him.

Disciple means “follower”. To follow the steps of the Master, to be like Him, to think like Him, to live like Him... The disciple coexists with the Master and accompanies him. The Lord teaches with facts and words. They have certainly seen Christ's attitude before the Absolute and the relative. They have heard him say quite often that God is the supreme value of our existence. They have admired the relation between Jesus and the celestial Father. They have seen the dignity and confidence, which Jesus displayed when praying to him. They have admired his radical poverty.

Today, the Lord speaks to us in clear-cut terms. Our Lord Jesus Christ must be loved by the true disciple with all his heart, well over all kinds of ties, even the closest ones: “If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26-27). In the follower's life, He is always the first one. St. Augustine says: “Let us reply to our father and to our mother: ‘I love you in Christ, not instead of Christ’.” In following Jesus even our love for life must rank as a second priority. To follow Jesus, after all, entails embracing the Cross. Without the Cross there is no disciple.

The evangelic call exhorts to prudence, that is, the virtue dictating our adequate behavior. Who wants to build a house must first find out whether he can face the expense. The king who must fight, after figuring out his own forces, decides whether to go to war or negotiate peace. He who wants to be a disciple of the Lord must first give up all his possessions. His own denial will be his best bet!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“Our spiritual birth is the result of a free choice, and we are in a certain way our own parents, creating ourselves as we ourselves wish to be, and through our will forming ourselves in accordance with the model that we choose.” (Saint Gregory of Nyssa)

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“For Christians carrying the cross is not an option but a mission to be embraced for love. In our world today, Christ does not cease to offer to all his clear invitation: anyone who wants to be my disciple must renounce his own selfishness and carry the cross with me.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them ‘renounce all that [they have]’ for his sake and that of the Gospel (Lk 14:33). Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on. The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n° 2,544)