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 contemplate Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. There He will give His life for the salvation of the world. “Great crowds were traveling with Jesus” (Lk 14:25): the disciples, walking with Jesus who goes before them, must learn to be new men. This is the purpose of the instructions that the Lord sets forth and proposes to those who follow him on his ascent to the “City of Peace.”

Disciple means “follower.” To follow in the footsteps of the Master, to be like him, to think like him, to live like him...the disciple lives with the Master and accompanies him. The Lord teaches with actions and words. They have clearly seen Christ's attitude between the absolute and the relative. They have heard from his lips many times that God is the primary value of existence. They have admired the relationship between Jesus and the heavenly Father. They have seen the dignity and confidence with which he prayed to the Father. They have admired his radical poverty.

Today the Lord speaks to us in clear terms. The authentic disciple must love our Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart and all his soul, above every other bond, even the most intimate: “If anyone comes to me without hating…even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26-27). He occupies the first place in the life of the follower. When our family says to you “Love us,” Saint Augustine said to answer, “I will love you in Christ, not instead of Christ.” Following Him precedes even love for one's own life. Following Jesus, after all, involves embracing the cross. Without the cross, there is no disciple.

The Gospel call exhorts us to prudence, that is, to the virtue that guides appropriate action. Whoever wants to build a tower must calculate whether he can afford the cost. The king who is about to go to war decides whether to go to war or ask for peace after considering the number of soldiers at his disposal. Whoever wants to be a disciple of the Lord must renounce all his possessions. Renunciation will be the best bet!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “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)

- “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)

- “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, nº 2,544)