



23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE C

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"Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:23

This gospel begins with Jesus preaching on a principal that on the surface sounds counter intuitive to His mission of peace. What underlies the meaning that we must "hate" our family and even ourselves? "Hate" is a strong word in English. Some commentators have suggested a translation that might reads *"the right ordering of our priorities between God and family..."* Though the language is awkward, the point is simple. Nothing and no one must stand in the way of following Christ. In Jesus' time people often relied on attachment to the identity of the patriarchal family. That quality in itself is good. But as this reliance turns to selfishness and obsession, it takes on the sin of pride, and this is the problem Jesus observed that needed addressing. If one obsessively loves life itself, and this obsession guides every mortal decision and action, then it must be forsaken.

The two parables that follow might be viewed as teaching moments for the importance of discerning one's primary vocation in life. What Jesus illuminates in this teaching is that each of us must first *daily* discern our vocation, then we are disposed to embracing the cost of discipleship no matter the cost. Otherwise the cost is too great and makes no sense. Once integrated to vocation we carry our cross gladly. In Jesus' words, *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11.28-30) As we move toward right ordering our priorities we see this as necessary to have the fortitude to be faithful to His calling. Then we are ready to walk away from our worldly possessions. Once the Sacred Heart of Jesus becomes the central drive in our life, the cross becomes the way. The burdon of the cross, our sacrificial offering, joins with Christ in the ultimate sacrifice of the Mass and becomes our *"oblation,"* our *"offering to God."*

Reflect this week on our baptismal charisms of priest, prophet and servant king. In particular reflect on the invitation in this gospel to focus on our prophet role, given in certainty that we are annointed by God and graced with His mantle of authority. We are called to care deeply for those to whom the prophetic word is addressed. As Jesus makes clear in his mission and ours, those we encounter must hear the underlying current of his love in our voice. As prophets, we are called to communicate the love and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus even as we are challenged daily to accept the invitation of Jesus to follow him completely and wholeheartedly. Carrying the cross becomes our outward sign that brings healing to the earth in the most radical way. As an intentional action, this fortifies our resolve. As we free ourselves from material possesions and social positions we take the step toward embracing the cost of discipleship, casting aside all obstacles that keep us from taking on the mind and heart of Jesus in our lives.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

Large crowds were travelling with Jesus;
and he turned and said to them,

*"Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother,
spouse and children, brothers and sisters,
And even his own life,
He cannot be my disciple.
Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me
cannot be my disciple."*

*"For which of you,
intending to build a tower,
does not first sit down and estimate the cost,
to see whether he has enough to complete it?
Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish,
all who see it will begin to ridicule him,
saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'"*

*"Or what king,
going out to wage war against another king,
will not sit down first
and consider whether he is able with ten thousand
to oppose the one who comes against him
with twenty thousand?
If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away,
he sends a delegation
and asks for the terms of peace."*

*"In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions
cannot be my disciple."*

The Gospel of the Lord.

