

Gospel

The 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Luke 14:25-33

Year C

Great crowds accompanied Jesus on his way, and he turned and spoke to them. 'If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. **Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.** 'And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, "Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish." Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to sue for peace. So in the same way, none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions.'



Reflection:

Jesus tells the crowds two short stories to explain what being a disciple means, and to show us that if we want to follow him we must give up everything. The first story is about a man who wants to build a tower. He must work out the cost to make sure he has enough money and resources to finish the job. The second story is about a king who is going to war. He must first count his soldiers and resources to make sure he can win the battle.

Jesus makes it very clear that being a disciple and following Jesus is not easy. We too must be prepared to count the cost. These tricky sayings and parables of Jesus make an obvious point—don't start what you cannot finish. Discipleship is difficult and is something we can commit to only if we are prepared to put the Kingdom of God before everything else. We do this by the choices we make every single day.

We must also "carry our cross" which means accepting the things we find difficult in our lives and asking for God's help in these things. These difficult things might be people we find it hard to get on with, lessons in school that we find boring or wanting something we can't have. It might be not having enough to eat or even living somewhere where there is violence.

When Jesus describes "hating" one's father and mother, he is not talking about feelings for our parents. He is simply emphasizing very strongly that choosing to be a disciple means that everything else—family, money, and even your own life—must come second. He isn't telling us to hate our family members. He uses that expression to explain that we can't love anyone or anything more than Him if we really want to follow Him. By loving Jesus and following His ways, our love for others in our world will shine out from us in all our thoughts and all our actions!



Post-it Challenge:

What do you think is the cost of being a follower of Jesus?



What do you think "giving up everything" means?

Think of one thing you might give up which will make you a better person. Even if it means not always being popular!

For a few moments in silence, think about what you find difficult and ask for God's help.

Now, still in silence pray for each other - that God will be with all of us.

Let us pray:

Teach me to be generous;
to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek to rest;
to labour and to ask for no reward
save that of knowing I do your will.

Amen.

Jacques Sevin SJ (1887-1951)

Lord, give me courage
to know you, to love
you, to follow you
always, however hard it
might be. Amen

Teach us to
give and not to
count the cost.

- Saint Ignatius