

Sunday: 05 SEPT' 2010
23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Reading 1: 1 Wis 9:13-18b

Psalm 90: 3-4,5-6,12-13,14-17

Reading 2: Phlm 9-10, 12-17

Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25-33

“ Whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple ”

Scripture: *Luke 14:25-33*

Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Meditation: Why does Jesus say we must 'hate' our families and even ourselves? The expression 'to hate' often meant to 'prefer less'. Jesus used strong language to make clear that nothing should take precedence or first place in our lives over God. Jesus knew that the way of the cross was the Father's way to glory and victory over sin and death. He counted the cost and said 'yes' to his Father's will. We, too, must "count the cost" and be ready to follow Jesus in the way of the cross if we want to share in his glory and victory. What is the "way of the cross" for you and for me? When my will crosses with God's will, then his will must be done. The way of the cross involves sacrifice, the sacrifice of laying down my life each and every day for Jesus' sake. What makes such sacrifice possible and "sweet" for us is the love of God poured out for us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle reminds us that "*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 5:5). We can never outgive God. He always gives us more than we can expect or imagine. Do you allow the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with the love of God? What does the parable of the tower builder and a ruler on a war campaign have in common? Both risk serious loss if they don't carefully plan ahead. In a shame and honor culture people want to avoid at all costs being mocked by their community for failing to complete a task they began in earnest. This double parable echoes the instruction of Proverbs: "By wisdom a house is built" and "by wise guidance you can wage a war" to ensure victory (Proverbs 24:3-6). Every landowner who could afford it walled in his orchard as a protection from intruders who might steal or harm his produce. A tower was usually built in a corner of the wall and a guard posted especially during harvest time when thieves would likely try to make off with the goods. Starting a building-project, like a watchtower, and leaving it unfinished because of poor planning would invite the scorn of the whole village. Likewise a king who decided to wage a war against an opponent who was much stronger, would be considered foolish if he did not come up with a plan that had a decent chance of success.

Jesus tells his would-be disciples that they, too, must count the cost if they want to succeed as his disciples. Jesus assures success for those willing to pay the price. All it cost is everything! What does Jesus have to offer that's worth giving up everything else? More than we can imagine! Jesus offers the gift of abundant life and everlasting peace and happiness with God. It's natural to ask what will it require of me or cost me before I sign up or agree to pay for something. Jesus was utterly honest and spared no words to tell his disciples that it would cost them dearly to follow after him. There can be no room for compromise or concession with God. We either give our lives over to him completely or we keep them for ourselves. Paul the Apostle says, "*We are not our own. We were bought with a price*" (1 Cor. 6:19b,20). That price is the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed for us upon the cross to redeem us from slavery to sin and death.

The love of God compels us to choose who or what will be first in our lives. To place any relationship or any possession above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges his disciples to examine who they love first and foremost. Jesus' way to glory and power is the opposite of the world's way of glory and power. The choice is ours, but the Lord does not leave us alone if we choose to follow him. Does the love of Christ compel you to put God first in all you do (see 2 Cor. 5)?

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Do you think a man's success in life is measured by the money he makes?

2. Is there a relationship in your life that you consider more important than a life in Christ?

3. Are you willing to let go the respect you earn in the society with your material success for a simple life in the worship of God?

"Lord, may your love transform me that I may truly desire nothing more than life with you. May you always be first in my thoughts and intentions, and in my words and actions."

Taken from: <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/index.html>