

4. November 2020

**“To follow the Lord”**

*Lk 14:25- 33*

*Great crowds accompanied him on his way and he turned and spoke to them. 'Anyone who comes to me without hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple. No one who does not carry his cross and come after me can 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, anyone who saw it would start making fun of him and saying, "Here is someone 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 was advancing 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 without giving up all that he owns.*

Following the Lord is a response of love to His call! A bishop once said to me: “The best thing is to have springboard vocations!” By this he meant those vocations which allow themselves to be grasped by the love of the Lord in such a way that they immediately leave everything to follow the Lord. Vocations such as we find in the apostles who left everything to follow Jesus! We do not find there a long period of reflection and consideration!

Does this contradict today's text, in which Jesus presents us with two earthly examples of careful reflection in order to take the step towards following Christ in a considered way?

The one does not contradict the other! We need to be certain of what following Christ means, at least in the strict sense, but also in the broader sense! In the strict sense, I mean a spiritual vocation that also corresponds to the life of the Lord in terms of its lifestyle! By the broader sense, I mean that the Word of the Lord is also valid when one has not been called into a monastic life or similar way.

In the following of the Lord, with all our heart, soul and strength, there cannot be anything “beside” it, which can take possession of our heart in the same way or

even more! This is why the Lord takes the examples of the closest relationships and even of our own lives! The call of the Lord asks for our total surrender to Him, for the willingness to leave everything for His sake! This is primarily a question of love!

In a way, this is reflected in a true conjugal love! For the sake of this love one also leaves the previous relationships - up to the parental home (*cf. Gen 2:24*)- in order to spend the whole of the future life with this one particular person! Apart from the love of God, which is even higher, nothing can compete with this love without hurting the expression of love! At the time of marriage, the priest asks whether you want to love your husband or your wife! Whoever does not really want to do so and has fundamental objections, does not have the conditions to make a valid marriage covenant! A good preparation for marriage should clearly present the whole dimension of conjugal love so that both lovers know what marriage means in its devotional character and their decision is consolidated.

Here we can return to the Word of the Lord! This is the same with devotion to the Lord! It cannot tolerate anything equally beside itself, for the Lord is a jealous God (*cf. Ex 20:5*)! If the marital bond with another person ends in death and one can then enter into a new marital bond, this is not the case with the answer to divine love! This bond is valid for time and eternity and this exclusiveness corresponds to the essence of love! From now on we love in God, which expands our capacity to love immensely!

This must be made clear if we want to follow the call of God undivided! Of course, God does not expect our hearts to be already completely imbued with His love and that our human response will be more or less perfect! We have a way to go, but we want to follow it with our free will and our whole consciousness - just as it is with marriage!

To this devotion also belongs the readiness to bear his cross! This is connected with this love relationship with Christ, all that we have to suffer for his sake, when we come into opposition to this world, when our testimony does not want to be heard or is even made ridiculous! When we think of marriage again, it means that in good and bad days we should stand together! It is the same with the Lord. Not only the simple days full of joy are requested, but also the difficult hours call us to faithfulness to Jesus!

When the Lord calls us, he also gives us the grace for this journey! Therefore, we must not be frightened when the Lord realistically shows us what the conditions for

discipleship are! We will not be able to do this on our own! Our ability to love is too weak for that!

If we apply the example of the King for us, then we are relying on His grace when deciding to follow the Lord! This counts more than the enemy's army, which can threaten me! So let us place our decision to follow the Lord with all our will in the hands of the Lord and ask Him to grow daily in love and faithfulness! Then we can wage war with the Lord against the other King, against all that can dissuade me from the great love and diminish my devotion to him, against all that can beguile my heart, so that I may truly abandon all material and spiritual possessions and Jesus alone may be my wealth!