

28. June 2021

“Follow the Call”

Mt 8:18-22

'When Jesus saw the crowd all about him he gave orders to leave for the other side. One of the scribes then came up and said to him, 'Master, I will follow you wherever you go. 'Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another man, one of the disciples, said to him, 'Lord, let me go and bury my father first.' But Jesus said, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead.'

It would serve little purpose for the Gospel and the demands of the following of Christ to relativize the unconditionality of Jesus' call. The salt would become tasteless and the light would fade (*cf. Mt 5:13-14*). The danger of mediocrity and lukewarmness would quickly appear, from which we Christians must always beware; for if we fall into them, our life would no longer differ from a merely worldly life.

In today's text, we are shown this unconditionality of the call. Jesus makes it clear to those who want to follow him what is implied in following him. The following of Christ cannot be confused with a comfortable, tranquil and secure life. Someone who does not want to let go of certain securities in his life will not be able to correspond to the call. The contradiction becomes especially evident when in communities or religious orders worldly attitudes are spread, which do not correspond to the true following of Christ. For example, if the sense of poverty and obedience is lost, then this precious call is emptied from within. Logically, the same applies to the third evangelical counsel: celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is very clear from the beginning, and does not intend to deceive anyone with false promises. We could interpret his words in this sense: “If you want to follow me, you will no longer have an earthly home, nor will you be able to lay your head on the securities of this world. You will now be in the service of the mission entrusted to you.”

But in exchange for what you give up, you receive a new home, which remains forever: the Will of God. Wherever we are, whatever we do, as long as we live fulfilling God's will we will feel deeply “at home”.

Also in the second example that today's Gospel shows us, we can clearly see the primacy of the call. In this case, one of his disciples asks the Lord to allow him to go first to bury his father. This is a noble deed, which obeys the commandment to honor father and mother. However, there is something that transcends even the nobility of such a service; there is a calling that surpasses even the high commandment to honor parents: the following of Christ!

Throughout the history of the Church, there were not a few cases of young people who entered into conflict after sensing the call to follow Christ unconditionally. Many encountered incomprehension - and even rejection - on the part of their parents and relatives. We know examples of how these calls had to be resisted, and sometimes it was even necessary to flee from the parental home. With this act, they overcame the first great test, showing that God's call was more important to them than their parents' home.

Those who undertake a deeper following of the Lord will not be exempt from similar trials. Many times they will have to overcome feelings of guilt with respect to those close to them who do not understand or accept what they are doing. This is a challenge that is not easy to overcome.

But if the call is authentic, we will receive all the help of the One who calls us, so that we can take this step of detachment.

The person must understand deeply how important it is to follow God's call. The time of our life is limited. This is the time in which we can act and make the right decisions, so that our life may bear as much fruit as possible for the Kingdom of God. We cannot remain asleep before this divine 'Kairos'! St. Paul advises us to make good use of the present time (*cf. Eph 5:16*).

If a person feels a call from God, he should follow it, having sought the advice of a good spiritual guide.

It is extremely important that there be vocations in the Church who put their whole life at the service of God, leaving everything behind for the sake of Jesus. Parents, friends and relatives are invited to support this vocation, without letting themselves be carried away by the pain of 'loss'. Nothing is lost if it is given to God! Could there be anything better for children than to follow God's call and find their happiness in it?