

17. July 2023

## God first

Mt 10:34-11:1

*At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come to set son against father, daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law; a person's enemies will be the members of his own household. 'No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me. No one who prefers son or daughter to me is worthy of me. Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. 'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 'Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes an upright person because he is upright will have the reward of an upright person. 'If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not go without his reward.'* When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples he moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.

We can always discover new dimensions in the Lord. Some of them surprise us and are not easy to understand at first. Today's text shows us one such aspect, for we are used to seeing the Lord as the One who brings true peace. In fact, this is still true, because Jesus is the "Prince of Peace" (cf. Is 9:5), the one who brings peace with God, peace with one's neighbour and thus also inner peace.

But true peace can only be received on the condition of truth; otherwise it will be a false or apparent peace, which at any moment will vanish again.

The words of the Lord that we hear in today's Gospel must be understood against this background. In the encounter with Him, the hour of decision comes for a person: either he opens himself to God's love and truth, or he does not. If he opens himself, true peace will be able to enter him; if he does not open himself, he will not be able to receive the peace that only God can give.

Because this decision is so essential, divisions can arise even in the closest family ties. Take the issue of abortion, for example. From a Christian perspective, we can never justify it.

Someone who seriously keeps God's commandments can never say 'yes' to such an action, and, with God's help, will resist any pressure that might come from his own family or from the State. Such persons would never give up the life of the unborn child! But it is possible that in their immediate family there may be a different opinion on the matter, so that animosity may arise over this issue.

The same can happen in many other areas, for the one who follows the Lord will often have convictions that are opposed to those who are marked by the mentality of the world.

The enmity that Jesus speaks of in today's Gospel is therefore the enmity that He Himself faced, when the light came into the world and the darkness did not receive it (cf. Jn 1:5). In Jesus we receive this light directly, for He is the light of the world and whoever follows Him does not walk in darkness (cf. Jn 8:12).

We are always called to follow and act in the truth, even when our surroundings - and even the people closest to us - do not understand or reject it. In the worst case, this situation can affect even the closest family ties and require strong decisions on our part. But nothing should come before God, and therefore nothing and no one can demand or take the place of God in our lives without causing great spiritual disorder.

The following of Christ involves our whole person and wants to lead us to the point of loving the Lord with all our heart, all our mind and all our strength (cf. Mt 22:37). Thus, the Lord also invites us to carry for love of Him the cross that comes our way every day (cf. Lk 9:23). It could be the cross of having to leave loved ones and familiar surroundings for His sake and for the sake of truth, in order to follow His call. It could be the cross of experiencing enmity from people we would never have imagined for Jesus' sake.

God will help us to carry the cross, if we remain faithful to Him. Then we may even grow; our love for Jesus will deepen and we will become more receptive to His love.

The most important thing is that we give God the place that is His alone, and that is the first place!