

Lent Meditation 6. 9th March 2021



Lk.14,26-27

Jesus says: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”

This is somewhat illustrated by Jesus’ call of the twelve disciples. They all *left* their “places” (father, work, home) in order to follow him. Their calling was for Jesus to come first. Most, if not all, who received healing by Jesus’ ministry and were commended for their faith were sent back to their families and communities, and the same was true of the many who followed him in order to hear his teaching. But not so the disciples. Peter was not exaggerating when he pointed out to Jesus that they had left everything in order to follow him.

It is not unimportant to notice that there were 2 sets of brothers – Peter and Andrew, and John and James – among the disciples, and all of them were commanded to ‘love one another as I have loved you.’ It is obvious that the above was not to be understood to make it a mark of discipleship to hate (in the modern sense of the word) one’s nearest and dearest.

But what it does mean is that we cannot follow Jesus unless he comes first in our lives, that faith in Jesus Christ, which must seek to follow him, is impeded, and indeed brought to fall, by that which does come first in our lives when that is not God revealed in Jesus Christ. The use of the strong and startling word “hate” in the statement is perhaps an indication of how difficult it is to say ‘no’ to a demand (by one’s spouse, child, parent – obvious and justified?) to come first and assign Jesus Christ second place, but how necessary. The greatest

demand to come first is that of our own life, and that too, supremely, needs to be hated.

Only the cross will teach us to set aside the demand of our life to come first and let Jesus do so. That is why it's there and why we must carry it. Where we follow we will see new and healed relationships. Did not Jesus from the cross say to his mother and to his disciple John, "Woman, here is your son", and to the disciple, "Here is your mother"? (Jn.19,26)

Then we love best when we seek for Jesus to come first – in our own life and in that of our loved ones.