

Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time C2025

In the Gospel of this morning our Lord sets three demands for whoever wants to be his disciple. The first is the detachment from familial affection and self-love. Being disciple requires being animated by a higher love that is superior to all the family ties and affections.

When our Lord says that nobody can come to him without hating his family, he does not teach us the hatred of family members. Rather, he wants us to prefer him to all possible kinship ties and even our own life. In doing so, he encourages us to break even the dearest bonds we have, if they are an obstacle to our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

The second demand is the capacity of bearing the cross in his footsteps. The cross is the sign of the gift of his life for our salvation. A disciple should be ready to offer his own life for the love of God and his fellows as he did. That is why to bear the cross means above all to accept courageously the trials of the present life for the sake of God's Kingdom, even if it brings us to lose our own life. The cross has nothing to do with masochism; it is a symbol of the difficulties of life we accept for the sake of those we love and the sake of the Kingdom.

The third demand is the detachment from material possessions. At times, material attachments prevent us from giving to God the first place in our life. So are some people so obsessed with their material goods that nothing counts outside them!

Plus, material possessions can bring us into mental game of locking our heart into our goods by forgetting that they are gifts from God and for that reason we have to share with the poor. In any case, the truth is that to follow our Lord requires a change of attitude toward the goods of this world, which have not an absolute value in them.

All that helps us understand why our Lord insists on the prudence and the wisdom we should have in making the right decisions at the right time so that we are successful in our relationship with Our Heavenly Father. There are concrete problems we have to tackle not only as good citizens, but also as good Christians. That is why our Lord speaks about sitting down and calculating the cost of discipleship, if we can really live and act according to the demands of his kingdom.

These demands of our Lord raise some questions: How can one prefer other people to his own family? Why shall one renounce his own interest where he would take advantage of the situation? Why shall one impose on himself sacrifice and accept renunciation where he would have been comfortable?

If we remain within human logic and use human arguments, these demands of our Lord would be impossible to fulfill. It is only when we let ourselves be guided by God's wisdom and Spirit that we can move on and act accordingly.

Left with ourselves, we can but make mistakes and mislead. Alone, we cannot find what God's will is, because our arguments are fuzzy and uncertain when it is about understanding the ways of God. If it is already difficult to understand all the things happening in the world, how much more would it be difficult to penetrate the thoughts of God.

It is God's wisdom, then, that helps us know the will of God and walk in the right paths in life. If God does not give us his wisdom, it will be very difficult for us to act wisely and with discernment in things we do. Wisdom is a gift that comes from God; it requires a total stripping of ourselves in order to abide in God. It brings us to make good decisions in preferring the good of our fellows instead of looking always for our own interests.

That is what St Paul recommends to Philemon about Onesimus, who was a slave, but has become in Jesus, through baptism, a brother. Whereas the fate of a slave in the ancient world was precarious and depending on the good will of his master, St Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus back well, to treat him just as if he were his child, his own heart and a dear brother to him. After all, what is the loss of some money compared to the joy of welcoming a brother? By recommending Philemon to do so, St Paul teaches him not only forgiveness, but also detachment from material goods.

Let me finish with this African saying: If you want to hunt lions, first take your spear and thrust it into the ground. If you cannot make it enter deep into the soil, give up the idea of hunting. The teaching is this: Do not deceive yourself about being a disciple of Christ. It is not just a matter of listening to the Gospel or being enthusiastic about it; it is demanding. Think about it and make good decisions that can bring you close to our Lord.

Wisdom 9: 13-18b; Philemon 9-10, 12-17; Luke 14: 25-33



Homily Date: September 7, 2025
© 2025 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD
Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20250907homily.pdf