

13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A
2 Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16; Psalm 89; Romans 6: 3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10: 37-42
Holy Spirit Catholic Church: June 28, 2020

Throughout the present discourse in Chapter 10 of Matthew's Gospel on missionary discipleship, Jesus has been striving to detach us from everything not of Him.

He has been inviting us to participate in the only life that really matters—His own life. By doing so, we confront and challenge the narcissism, individualism, and secularism of our age.

So, Jesus has been challenging us to detach from every material possession, project, and person that we have made more important than our relationship with Him.

This is the context of his challenging teaching today on loving Him more than any family member.

He is not saying, "Don't love your father or mother or son or daughter." Rather, what he is saying is love Him the most, make him #1 in our life.

What is very important to understand is how this works.

We are not being invited by Jesus to bring him into our life.

The Christian life is not about making room for Jesus in our life, so that He occupies a small corner of our heart.

No!

Rather, Jesus is opening the doors into His life and granting each of us a share in His Heart.

We are being called to enter into life with him, into His life.

That's what St. Paul is teaching about the transformative nature of baptism.

Baptism means dying with Christ Jesus to everything that is not of Him and rising with him to newness of life now, to share in His life now.

This is why the life of the disciple is about more than simply going to church once a week.

What we are reminded of at Mass is that the Lord Jesus desires to be part of everything we say and do every day, at every moment.

So that eventually we can say with St. Paul,

"I live no longer I, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)

The way this happens is following Him on the way to Calvary.
The way we enter into life with the One who comes to give us abundant life is by taking up our cross and following Him.

Many Christians think that taking up one's cross means to passively "suffer" whatever sorrows come our way in life.
That the cross is something we have to put up with or endure.
But this is not the teaching of Jesus.
He uses two vigorous verbs---"take" and "follow"—to emphasize that the cross is something we choose, not something that happens to us.

With Jesus, we make sacrifices of love for others,
we give ourselves away in love for others,
We "forget" ourselves, we lose our very selves
in order to find ourselves in Him.
The way of the Christian is the Way of the Cross because that is the road to redemption.

Since we are daily dying with Him in order to rise with Him
to a more generous loving of others, then we begin understand that the Cross we carry is His Cross, and he carries it with us.
We are not imitating Him by carrying around our own little cross. No!
There is only one Cross, and it is the cross of the Savior of the world.
There is not His big cross and my little cross. No!

We are invited into vigorous, energetic, passionate participation in the carrying of the one, glorious, redemptive Cross, of which there is no other.
To be ONE with Christ Jesus in this way is an invitation into deep, life-giving intimacy with Him, to plunge into His Heart from which all Love flows.

Whatever we are doing, wherever we are, as Christians
we are meant to always carry the Cross of Jesus in obedience and love.
What slowly dawns on us that at the center of the Way of the Cross
are not so much specific actions but rather a deepening Communion with Jesus,
from which all our actions then flow.

As we live for God in Christ Jesus, we begin to understand freedom differently.
We have been set free by Christ to live for others, not to do whatever we want.

When we die with Christ to self-centeredness, we rise up to new life,
a life lived for others.
We begin to see how our choices impact the lives of others.

I may have the right to do something,
but with every right comes a responsibility toward others.

Where the Lord Jesus is, there is freedom,
not necessarily to do what we selfishly want to do,
but the freedom to do what we ought to do.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi