

The price of discipleship vs. ideologies

Pondering the Word of God in the liturgy this week, culminating in Luke 14:25-33, I experienced the **fear of the Lord**. I do not mean dreadful fear but rather that of being shaken up by the awareness of **how radical is the Lord's call to His disciples**.

I prayed: "Am I fully understanding and responding? Am I teaching the Path with conviction? Like the prophets, I find it difficult to speak the Word of God that burns in my heart. I am afraid of rejection and of not being understood. But I must speak. The Lord is calling us to take His Word to heart.

Luke 14:25 tells us that, as Jesus approached Jerusalem, "**great multitudes accompanied Him**." They were full of expectations about Jesus entering Jerusalem and restoring David's kingdom. Jesus turned around and addressed them. It was a stark and decisive moment.

If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

"Hating" here means giving up our old way of loving because, in our fallen nature, our love is tainted with self-love, which leads to false expectations and control. Jesus will replace that kind of love with His divine-human love. Then we love everyone more than before. How is this change going to happen? Jesus tells us:

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

We can be disciples only by choosing to love as Jesus does, carrying the Cross.

The original impact of His words is hard for us to grasp. The message caused scandal, especially for the Jews following Jesus.

The Cross was an instrument of execution and torture. The victim was made a spectacle of agonizing death to instill fear. To maximize the pain and humiliation, the condemned victim was forced to carry his own cross to the site of execution, so "**to carry one's cross**" meant that you were on death row. Your fate was sealed without the possibility of an appeal. Jews hated the Cross because, in Deut. 21:22, a curse is attached to anyone who died "on a tree." In the eyes of the Jews, to be crucified meant total defeat, total failure.

Even though Jesus had warned them before, the crowd had no idea that He was marching towards His death on the Cross. Now He tells them that anyone who follows Him must also be willing to die on the Cross with Him. True love seeks to be one with the beloved in good times and in bad. The disciple is the bride that is called to love Jesus, the Bridegroom, as He loves. This love is consummated by their union at the Cross.

The multitude represents humanity that does not know love. They continued with Him merrily to Jerusalem, not thinking of what He said. They celebrated his entrance into the city with rejoicing anticipating a great triumph. But, since the Word was not allowed to enter good soil, it withered. Everyone abandoned Him as soon as the current turned against Him. In the end, only Mary, John, and a few women remained. We can run the same danger.

If you wish to construct a tower

Next, Jesus tells the crowd, “if you **wish to construct a tower**, you first **calculate the cost**.” You and I wish to construct a tower. That tower is our relationship with Christ. Do we want to live according to the Gospel and what Jesus has taught us in Love Crucified? Then, we **MUST be sober and calculate the cost, which is the Cross**.

Not that we should look for suffering for itself. Instead, Jesus calls us to unconditional love. Is it not true that we all desire that our loved ones accompany us in our trials, even when that means sharing in our suffering? Jesus wants the same love. Like humanity, the multitudes that accompanied Jesus did not know how to love and could not remain with the Beloved in His trial. As long as we are in this world, we must face many evils, and only true love remains faithful unto the cross.

If you go to war

Jesus tells us that if we go to war, we must know our strength and that of the enemy. Like in the story of the tower, Jesus here teaches that there is a price to discipleship. Satan is coming at us with a force superior to ours. If we rely on our resources, Satan, emboldened, will defeat us. But, if we put those resources in the hands of Jesus and obey Him, willing to embrace the cross, we will suffer, but Satan will flee.

Jesus speaks clearly and bluntly about what it takes to follow Him. We are not used to that. We would like to think that His words are poetical. We expect a leader to attract us by telling us what we want to hear: words of affirmation, such as, “come to Jesus, and all your troubles will be solved.” We want to hear that God is love and mercy, but not that the Lord’s love and mercy always take us to repentance and a new life—necessary for salvation.

Many say that we can be saved without repenting and changing our way of life and even receive the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin. They are not loving; they are leading people to hell. Repentance is always the path to a relationship with Christ.

- Luke 5:1-11: Peter saw the miraculous catch; he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”
- Luke 7:36: The woman who wept for her sins at Jesus’s feet
- Zacchaeus, the tax collector

A disciple’s love is shown by renouncing expectations and trusting Jesus with everything: relationships, ideas, attachments, time, and possessions.

Very few want to hear this message, much less respond. In his article “Prophetic Fatigue” (Aug. 23, 2022), Mark Mallet writes about the complaints he receives from people who don’t want to hear about the challenges of our times. Like the multitude following Jesus in Luke’s Gospel, they don’t want to hear about the Cross. They say it is “negative.” They claim to be “overwhelmed.”

The Lord has given us in Love Crucified the gift of community so that we can help each other live our vocation and not give up. From the beginning, the messages speak about our times AND about how to live them in the power of the Cross.

We cannot follow Jesus and the world

Jesus's disciples today are under the attack of ideologies that are at work throughout the world. This is the journey to the cross that we must now walk with Jesus. Remember the [story of Blessed Franz Jaggerstatter](#), martyred by the Nazis, because it is happening again. Nazis are called "right-wing" and the communists "left-wing," as if they were on opposite ends. But both identify themselves as "socialists" and use the same methods to impose tyranny and cause the greatest genocides and diabolical oppression in the history of humanity. They are only opposed as much as each wants to total control, and only one can have it.

These ideologies seek to demolish Christian principles. They invent "rights" to abortion, unchaste sexual relations, the right to "change" our gender, and mutilate children with irreversible surgeries. Just as to our first parents, the serpent tells us, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil" Gen 3:5, which means we decide what is right and wrong, not God.

These ideologies are taught in schools, universities, the media, and elsewhere (even in some Catholic circles).

- Words that stand for virtues, such as seeking justice, liberty, freedom, and equality, are used as a cover to do the opposite.
- They claim to be champions for the poor, women, the minorities.
- In Colombia, the claim to defend the indigenous people.

There are many good causes that Catholics should support as a matter of justice, but ideologues exploit them to gain power as they do in Russia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. No one who lives in Colombia can ignore the multitude of Venezuelan refugees victims of these ideologies.

The end does not justify the means

We must discern by being attentive to the means used to achieve objectives. As Catholics, we believe that **the ends do not justify the means. We must use good means to achieve good ends.**

- **To kill, to steal, to promote chaos, to lie, to kidnap, to blackmail, to defame, to corrupt the youth... these are sinful means that deny the dignity of persons and the common good. No matter who uses them, they are evil means.**

If we become captive of an ideology or to our selfish interests, we no longer discern based on objective morality. Instead of seeking truth, we strive to defend our ideology. The cause—the poor or the indigenous people—becomes a façade, a mere tool for propaganda. **We then ignore the objective evil that the ideologies do** or justify it as necessary to attain the ideals of the ideology.

The Lord promised to send His Spirit so we can discern what is true. But we must humbly seek self-knowledge and put to death the lies that have become entrenched in our thinking.

Ideologies hate the Catholic faith

Ideologies hate the true Catholic faith. Depending on their region, they either replace it with pagan religions or atheism. They know that Christ is the greatest obstacle to their plans. In Latin America, they claim that indigenous people were living in paradise until Christianity arrived. This is a myth. ALL of humanity is fallen, and ALL need to be redeemed by Christ.

Another tactic is to condemn the Church based on the wrongs done by Christians. But those wrongs were not done because they were Christians but because they did NOT live as Christians.

In some places, the leaders of the ideologies call themselves Catholic while doing all they can to demolish Christian principles. They are Trojan horses seeking to have us believe that we can be Christians and embrace their agenda.

Corinthians 3:18-23:

Brothers and sisters: Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you considers himself wise in this age, let him become a fool, so as to become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God.

The vocation of Love Crucified is to form disciples of Jesus who remain faithful through these decisive times of deceptive ideologies and accompany Him to the Cross. Since the beginning, the Lord has been telling us: "I do all things new" Rev 21:5. So let us allow Him to make us new.