

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)
September 5, 2010

Who on earth would want to be a disciple?

Many people have been comparing our current recession that has been going on for a few years now with the Great Depression in the 1930's.

The financial well being of our families, communities, and local and national government is a big concern for many people.

Just as with the Great Depression, people have lost their jobs, life savings, businesses and even their homes and livelihoods.

Perhaps we even know of such people – or worse, are such people.

It is said that what got the people through the 1930's and helped them survive is not the reliance upon tangible things, but intangible things such as family unity, love, and hope for the future.

In other words, people did not trust in material possessions; rather, people trusted in their families, in love for one another, and maintained a sense of hope for a better future.

Still, this life was so tough and painful that no one ever wanted to repeat – or wanted their children to repeat – what happened with the Great Depression.

Nonetheless, this is not too different than what our Lord is calling us to in our Gospel today if we want to be disciples, namely, to abandon family, possessions, and to carry one's cross.

“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.”

“Anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

And so, with this, who on earth would want to be a disciple?

If discipleship strictly requires us to “hate” father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and even our own life, who would want to be a disciple?

If discipleship strictly requires us to be willing to pick up our own cross – our own struggles, sacrifices, and humiliations – and follow Jesus to Calvary, who would want to be a disciple?

If discipleship strictly requires us to rid ourselves of all possessions – material wealth, awards, prestige and such – who would want to be a disciple?

To follow all these rules and fulfill all these requirements sounds like a hard, tough, and possibly painful life.

I mean, to willingly give up family, friends, and property and accept numerous sacrifices in our lives just so that we could call ourselves disciples of Christ...who on earth would want to do that?

If we stop here, it makes no sense why anyone would want to be a disciple of Christ.

But, if we stop here, we have only heard half the message.

Our Lord does not call us and only give us half his message though.

He calls us and gives us the entire message.

So, what's the rest of the message?

The rest of the message is found in our first reading from Wisdom.

“Who can know God’s counsel, or who can conceive what the Lord intends?”

In other words, who knows God’s wisdom and understands as God?

To stop before hearing this, we look upon the requirements of

discipleship and we tend to think as human beings do, not as God does.

But, God does not call us to think, act, or even believe as humans do; rather, He calls us to think, act, believe, and live as God does.

In other words, don’t listen to only the first half of the message and thus, don’t be of the earth...listen to the entire message and be of the Lord and for the Lord.

To be of the Lord is to be intimately close to God.

It is to surrender to God, to live for God, and to have faith in God.

And when we do this, we experience total liberation and freedom as well as complete and utter bliss and happiness and fulfillment.

Also, when we put our trust in God and sacrifice everything for Him – family, possessions, the cross – we will realize that all we need all along is God anyway. We need nothing else but God.

And this awareness will draw us closer to God and in effect, make us better family members who are truly concerned and involved in the lives of our loved ones in more meaningful ways.

It will also make us more responsible property owners who acquire only the things we really need and give to others who have not.

Lastly, it will make us open to receiving our crosses in life knowing that we do so for the glory of God and God's heavenly kingdom.

And this is why we should want to be disciples.

So, when asked, "Who on earth would want to be a disciple?" can we stand up knowing all that it requires and say, "I do!"