

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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Great crowds accompanied Jesus on his way and he turned and spoke to them. 'If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

'And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, "Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish." Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to sue for peace. So in the same way, none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions.'

(Luke 14:25-33)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The use of the term *hate* in this text should not be taken to mean hatred as such but rather should be understood as pointing to things that may hinder the single-mindedness needed to take up the call to discipleship.
- The Greek word *ekklesia*, used for the Church, means being called out from or apart from others. This understanding is suggested by Jesus' words in this text.
- A recurrent theme in Luke's Gospel is that obsessive attachment to money or material wealth is a hindrance to a full and complete relationship with God. It distracts people from what is really important in life.

EXPLORING THE WORD

To be a disciple of Jesus involves radical choices! One must be single-minded in one's commitment to Christ and not put anything else in a place of greater importance. The use of the word *hate* is difficult in this passage. Is Jesus really calling his disciples to 'hate' those who love us? Surely we come to know something of the love of God through human love. The problem may lie in the Semitic languages, which lack some of the subtlety of modern idiom. In Hebrew, 'to hate' is the opposite of 'to prefer'. What Jesus is really saying is that we must prefer to seek God rather than to seek earthly love or relationship. It is our relationship with God that is of utmost value. Discipleship comes at a cost, and the cost is the cross! We must be prepared to go the whole way and not leave the task half done. Just as Jesus responded totally to the call of the Father, we too must give our total response to the call to follow him.

- How might putting Christ first change your relationships with others?
- Will choosing to follow Jesus cause difficulties in your relationship with family and friends? How will you deal with this?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What has your decision to follow Jesus cost you?
- Are there times when you feel that you may be unable to 'finish the work'? What is hindering your progress on your journey?
- How well do you plan ahead for your life in eternity?
- Are there 'crosses' that you carry?
- Have you ever made a great personal sacrifice for another, or do you know of someone who has? Tell the story. There are many people who 'carry their cross' daily. You may like to explore some stories of the burdens that people carry. How do they cope? In what ways do you find this inspirational?
- Do something that 'costs' you this week. Identify someone who has a cross to carry and try to assist them, even in a small way, to shoulder that burden.
- Use today's gospel acclamation as your prayer this week:

*Let your face shine on your servant,
and teach me your laws.*

