



LIVING THE GOSPEL



**23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.
September 7th 2025**

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

Gathering Prayer

All: O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption, look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters, that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom and an everlasting inheritance. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25-33

²⁵ Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Gospel Focus

This gospel is always hard to hear. Jesus' call to hate our own family goes against our natural instincts to love, protect, and honor them. These instincts are good, put in place by God. They are part of how God loves us in this life, by enabling us to share love with each other. But being a follower of Christ means transcending the natural affection that families share. It means participating in God's love such that there are no favored ones among us. It means loving all as God does, equally and fully. Our human loves find their completion in the love of God, which does not divide or have preferences even as it loves each of us individually. This transcendent, all-encompassing love does not erase our human loves but perfect them.

Gospel Reflection

Many who have taken a path of doing great things for God, by founding a new ministry or working toward a difficult goal, for example, have realised that it is the one thing to set out on a path and another to sustain a commitment for the long haul. Such a scene confronts us in today's gospel.

Great crowds who have been healed and fed by Jesus were following him as he travelled. He addresses them in very sober terms about what it takes to stay with him for the whole way. He speaks about calculating the cost, not to dissuade any potential disciples, but rather to be sure that they are aware of what commitment to him demands, lest they be caught unaware. He names three of the greatest stumbling blocks: attachment to family, to possessions and to life itself. None of these are wrong by itself. None of these in themselves are wrong, but for disciples these attachments cannot take priority over attachment to Jesus.

The saying about hating one's own family members is jolting to our ears, as it was to Jesus' first followers. In Jesus' time, people did not conceive of themselves as individuals but derived their identity and social standing from their family, clan, village and religious group. It would be unimaginable to cut oneself off from family; this would be tantamount to losing life itself.

Looking at other passages in the Gospel of Luke, we see that Jesus himself does not renounce his family. Unlike Mark (3:30-34), Luke (8:21) leaves open the possibility that Jesus' blood kin can also be his disciples. In fact, Luke portrays Jesus' mother as one who faithfully hears the word of God and obeys, and in the story of Pentecost (Acts 1:14), Luke notes that Jesus' mother and siblings are among the disciples in the Upper Room. What Jesus asks however, is that a disciple be willing to embrace as kin, others who are not related by blood. Disciples must act as brother and sister towards those who are different, whether by physical ability or any other status marker. For some disciples, this new family will cause tension and even rupture in one's biological family. A disciple needs to be forewarned of this difficulty and be prepared to confront it. We see a concrete example in the second reading, in which Paul implores Philemon, the slave owner, to accept Onesimus as a brother and an equal.

There is a curious twist in the gospel, as the parables Jesus tells would seem to advise building up one's resources in order to accomplish one's ends. The final verse takes us in exactly the opposite direction-calculating the cost of discipleship leads one to total divestment! In addition, we might note that although Luke envisions only male disciples in (14-26), elsewhere he clearly depicts women disciples Luke 18:1-3, 24:1-12 and Tabitha in Acts 9: 33); Lydia in Acts 16 and Prisca in Acts 18, whose attachment to Jesus superseded love of family, possessions, and life itself.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading – Wisdom 9:13-18

¹³ For what man can learn the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills?

¹⁴ For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail, ¹⁵ for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.

¹⁶ We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labor; but who has traced out what is in the heavens? ¹⁷ Who has learned thy counsel, unless thou hast given wisdom and sent thy holy Spirit from on high? ¹⁸ And thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and men were taught what pleases thee, and were saved by wisdom."

Responsorial Reading – Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17

R: In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge. (R)

You turn man back to dust, saying, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in your sight are as yesterday, now that it is past, or as a watch of the night. **(R)**

You make an end of them in their sleep; the next morning they are like the changing grass, which at dawn springs up anew, but by evening wilts and fades. **(R)**

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart. Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants! **(R)**

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days. And may the gracious care of the Lord our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands! **(R)**

Second Reading – Philemon 9-10, 12-17

...⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an ambassador and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment. ...¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will.¹⁵ Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back for ever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

1618. Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social. (Cf. Lk 14:26; Mk 10:28-31) From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him, and to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming. (Cf. Rev 14:4; 1 Cor 7:32; Mt 2:56) Christ himself has invited certain persons to follow him in this way of life, of which he remains the model:

"For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." (Mt 19:12)

2544. Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel. (Lk 14:33; cf. Mk 8:35) Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on. (Cf. Lk 21:4) The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

Sharing and Discussion

1. Jesus asks us to love Him above all. In our family life/workplace today, what does it mean to put Christ first? In what ways do you find it hard to follow Jesus?
2. What are the small or big crosses that you carry in daily life? How do you carry them—with resignation, or with trust?
3. “When each of us carries our cross, we learn compassion. We begin to see each other’s struggles, and we walk together as disciples—not alone, but as a family in Christ.” Are you willing to let others walk with you in your struggles, or do you try to carry your cross all alone?

Closing Prayer

All: God of Moses, hear our prayers this day. Grant us the strength to witness to your love and the healing we need to continue our journey toward you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.