

**ANY ONE WHO DOES NOT RENOUNCE ALL THAT HE HAS CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Lk 14.25-33**

***At that time, great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone 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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.***

***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? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'***

***Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.***

After having denounced the ties of interest, of the popular clique of Pharisees, made up of friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbours, now Jesus dissolves these interests. We read the Gospel of Luke, chapter 14, 25.

*"Now great crowds accompanied him,"* Jesus had begun the journey towards Jerusalem and was followed by a great crowd. Why? They are convinced that Jesus is the conqueror Messiah that goes to take power at Jerusalem. Therefore they follow him to share the spoils, if they are close to him they will share his power and also all the riches of the conquest.

Jesus, seeing this misunderstanding of this crowd that follow him, he stops and proposes three important conditions that are always valid because they are the conditions to be one of his followers. Let's see them.

*“and he turned.. “ towards the crowd “.. and said to them,” The first condition is this: “If anyone 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, ( that is one’s own existence) he cannot be my disciple.”*

Then Jesus asks an adherence that goes beyond family ties. If there is one of these components, from the father to the wife, the sons. Sister or even one’s own wellbeing of existence, that could be an impediment to following Jesus, he asks you to give it up.

The three conditions that we now examine are freely chosen and chosen for freedom, because one can only follow if one is totally free. The second: *“Whoever does not bear his own cross ( the evangelist says literally “lift up” and later we will see why) and come after me cannot be my disciple.”*

The evangelist is not speaking to carrying the cross always, but is indicating the precise moment, when the condemned person was condemned to this terrible punishment. In that moment the condemned person had to lift the horizontal axis of the cross – the vertical part was always already standing in the place of the execution - and must carry it to the place of punishment.

It was a terrible punishment, because it was a religious obligation, on the part of the crowd, also on the part of the family, friends and acquaintances, of the people who had perhaps benefited, to insult and ill-treat the prisoner.

So this image of taking up the cross means to accept the contempt of society, but it is not a negative choice, but one of freedom. Because when one does not care anymore about one’s reputation, when one is no longer conditioned by what others may think or say about us, we are free at last.

Therefore these three choices that Jesus asks of us to do are choices of freedom and for freedom. Then Jesus gives two examples in which lack the means, the resources are lacking. And the surprise is that the solution is not to have more means and more resources, but the total renunciation. So Jesus says: *“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?”* And the other example is: *“..what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?..”*

Here are two examples in which there is the lack the means to undertake some action. We expect that Jesus asks to increase these means, these resources, instead here is the final choice, that will be made by the greater part of the crowd then they will abandon him, here is the third and last condition, that should be taken seriously. Jesus’ words cannot be selected, those that make us comfortable, those we like and those do not like.

All Jesus’ words are words that communicate life. The last is this. *“So therefore, anyone of you..”* that is the crowd that follow him *“.. who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”* Jesus knows

that in the hearts of mankind and it is known the people are ready to accept the first condition, that of preferring the family relationship or your own life. Jesus knows that the people are able to take up the cross, accept the contempt, but do not touch the interests of the person! Do not touch their convenience.

So who expects some kind of spiritual advice to follow him, Jesus asks very clearly, to renounce all that they have. “ you cannot be my disciple” Why not? Because Jesus –and Luke is the one who more than others develops this – knows that these things are good, useful, serve for the wellbeing and create wellbeing, but you get to a certain point, where the person instead of owning these assets it is owned by them.

The proof is that one is incapable to get rid of them. Incapable to be generous. So, to follow Jesus, one must be fully generous. For Jesus one possesses only that which one gives. That which is kept is not possessed, but posses us.

So for Jesus the owning of possessions is an obstruction. The summary of all this is that those who count on their own strength cannot rely and then accommodate the power of the holy spirit.