

ANYONE OF YOU WHO DOES NOT RENOUNCE ALL THAT HE HAS CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE–Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Luke 14,25-33

Now 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, with the famous Pharisees clique, made up of friends, brothers, relatives and rich neighbours, Jesus now dissolves these interests. Let’s read Luke’s gospel chapter 14, 25-33

“*Now great crowds accompanied him,..*” Jesus has begun the journey towards Jerusalem and is followed by numerous crowds. Why? They are convinced that Jesus is the conqueror Messiah who is going to take power in Jerusalem. So they follow him to divide up the spoils, if they stay close to him they will share his power and also all the riches of the conquest.

Jesus, seeing this misunderstanding of these crowds following him, stops and poses three important conditions that are always valid because they are the conditions for being his follower. Let's see them.

“*he turned 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, he cannot be my disciple.”*

So Jesus asks for an adhesion that goes above the family ties. If there is one of these components, from the father to the wife, the children, the sister, or even his own well-being or his own existence, which can be an impediment to the following of Jesus, he asks to renounce it.

The three conditions we are now examining are choices of freedom and choices for freedom, because we can only follow him if we are fully free. The second: “*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*” The evangelist is not talking about carrying the cross forever, but he is indicating a precise moment, when a condemned man was condemned to

this terrible torture and at that moment he had to lift the horizontal axis of the cross - the vertical one was always stuck in the place of execution - and he had to carry it to the place of the punishment. It was a terrible moment, because it was a religious duty, on the part of the crowd, even on the part of family, friends and acquaintances, of people who had perhaps benefited, to insulted and beat the condemned man.

Then this image of raising one's cross means accepting contempt on the part of society, but it is not a negative choice, but one of freedom. Because when you no longer care about your reputation, when you are no longer conditioned by what others may think or say about us, you are finally free.

So these three choices that Jesus asks us to make are choices of freedom and for freedom. Then Jesus brings two examples in which the means and the resources are lacking. And the surprise is that the solution is not to have more means or resources, but total renunciation. In fact, 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 another 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 the means to undertake a venture are lacking. We would expect Jesus to ask us to increase these means and resources, but here is the final choice, the one that will ensure that a large part of the crowd will abandon it, this is the third and last condition, which must be taken seriously. The words of Jesus cannot be selected, those that suit us and those we like from those that we do not like

All Jesus' words are words that communicate life. This is the last one. *“So therefore, any one of you (that is to the crowd that is following him) who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”* Jesus knows what is in the hearts of men and we know that people are willing to accept the first condition, that of referring to family ties or to their own life. Jesus even knows that people are capable of lifting the cross, accepting contempt, but do not touch people 's interests ! Don't touch their convenience!

So to those who expect some kind of spiritual advice to follow him, Jesus asks in a very simple and clear way, to renounce all possessions. "He cannot be my disciple." Why this? Because Jesus - and Luke is the evangelist who most of all develops this - knows that goods are good things, useful, serve to feel good and to create well-being, but we arrive at a certain point when these goods, rather than possessing these assets they possess us

The proof is that they are unable to give it up. Unable to be generous. Then, to follow Jesus, one must be fully generous. For Jesus one possesses only what one gives. The one who holds things for himself is possessed by his possessions.

Then for Jesus the possession of possessions is an impediment. The summary of all this is that those who rely on their own strength cannot count on and accept the strength of the Holy Spirit.

