

XXIII ORDINARY TIME – September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**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.***

In this Sunday's Gospel Luke presents the three radical conditions provided by Jesus to those who want to follow him.

Which is the framework? Jesus is going to Jerusalem and is followed by many people who, for a misguided understanding of the Messiah, are following him thinking they would have divided power and spoils. They think that Jesus is a glorious Messiah, the son of David, who is to restore the ancient kingdom of Israel, and did not understand that Jesus is the Son of God, not willing to take the power, but to give his life in Jerusalem.

And Luke, the evangelist, writes in chapt. 14, verses 25-33, that "*Great crowds accompanied him*". So Jesus, realizing this misunderstanding, many people following him for a wrong sense of interest, "*turned and said to them ...*", and this is the first condition, "*«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 ...»*», here he uses the Greek word 'psyché', meaning 'himself', "*«he cannot be my disciple»*".

During the previous lunch with the Pharisee Jesus denounced the ties that bound this sect, and in Jesus group all relationships based on friendship, kinship of interest, shall be absent.

So much absent that adherence to Jesus must go beyond the family and particularly there's the image of the wife for Jesus previously said to his disciples that one of common obstacles for entering the kingdom was "I got married so I cannot come".

The first radical condition is that adherence to Jesus must go beyond family ties, the opposite of that of the clique, the sect of Pharisees, where everything was done for the interest of the group.

The second radical condition was the acceptance of contempt on behalf of society and the consequent the great loneliness. In fact, Jesus says "*«Whoever does not bear his own cross»*", literally "whoever does not raise his cross", "*«and come after me cannot be my disciple»*".

This is the second time that the cross is mentioned, but please remember that it is never intended as the suffering, all sad moments that life inevitably brings with it, it never has this kind of meaning in Gospels, but 'raising the cross' means accepting the contempt of society for all those who were condemned to this infamy were considered the dregs of society.

Particularly Jesus refers to the very moment when the convict had to raise the horizontal axis of the cross. Since then he had to reach the place of execution passing through wings of crowd for whom insulting and beating him was a religious duty.

Then the second radical condition is to accept the loneliness and contempt on behalf of society. Through two examples concerning the tower and the war, Jesus exhorts people to realize their own energies; however, this is important, does not mean to discourage anyone who has no strength, but calls anyone to put his strength in the Spirit.

So this means knowing our limits and rely on what is the ultimate power of Jesus, the power of the Spirit.

And the shock, the final surprise to those who follow him to divide the spoils, as e says, "*«So therefore, any one of you»*", and here one would expect some kind of spiritual advice, some kind of ascetic rule. Jesus provides the third condition in order to be a disciple as "*«who does not renounce all that he has, cannot be my disciple»*". Renouncing to what one has, avoiding to rely just on possessions allows to rely on what one gives, as Jesus only needs free individuals as followers. As a matter of fact the three conditions are all choices of freedom and for freedom.

Particularly this fact of renouncing to possessions recalls what Jesus previously said in a parable, where one of the excuses not to attend this banquet was "I bought a field" and another "I bought five yoke of oxen".

Therefore possessions and assets represent an impediment. Well then, there are three radical conditions, all of them in the name of freedom, only those who are free can fully follow the Lord. What about the others? The others stay home.

