

## **23RD SUNDAY ORD. (C) HOW TO BE A COMMITTED CHRISTIAN**

Many leaders who wanted and want to have many followers would try to make their ideologies and plans very attractive to would-be followers. This is totally different in the case of Jesus. He made following Him unattractive in human terms. He did not want to deceive anybody. He presented the truth for those who wish to be saved.

For the past two Sundays, we heard His teachings about entering through the narrow gate, (Lk.13:22ff), and taking low seats at functions and inviting the poor and needy when having banquets, (Lk.14:7ff). Today too He has told His followers how to be a committed disciple. The one who wants to follow Him should 'hate' his family, himself, and possessions. In the eyes of the world, this is unthinkable, because we love our families and ourselves, and we want to acquire some possessions. He is calling for detachment from worldly things including our own selves.

He also reminded His followers, or would-be followers to plan ahead and to have foresight in living their lives. He compared following Him with someone planning to build a house and a king going to war with another king. He told them to consider the shame involved in not being able to succeed as a disciple.

The first reading explains the reason why Jesus is telling us to denounce the world, family and the self. The author of Wisdom talks about how the perishable body weighs down the soul, and it is when God gives His wisdom and the Holy Spirit from on high that the path of those on earth would be made straight. We need God's wisdom because "the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail".

St. John told the believers: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world - the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches - comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God

live forever,” (1Jn.2:15-17). St. Paul also told the Romans, “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace...Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him,” (Rom.8:6, 9).

The second reading is also teaching us how to be a committed disciple; it is to forgive and to show love and compassion. Onesimus was Philemon’s slave who stole from him and then ran away. But when he met Paul, he was converted. Paul decided to send him back to his master, and he advised Philemon to accept him as a new person, a brother, and not as a slave. St. Paul could have kept him to serve him in prison, but he did not want to be selfish and be attached to him.

Like Onesimus, we too have been set free by Christ, so nothing on earth should be an obstacle on our way to follow Him. We are not to be slaves to earthly things any more. It is time we put the wishes and desires of God over and above our own, if we want salvation. On one occasion, Peter asked Jesus: “Look, we have left our homes to follow you’. And Jesus said to them, Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get much more in this age, and eternal life in the age to come,” (Lk.18:28-30). Am I committed to Christ as a priest and Christian? Are you a committed Catholic Christian?