

All of Me

I remember listening to a student in university give her testimony about her life. She had encountered the powerful love of God and was empowered to live out her faith even more. However, she had one foot in living completely for God and one foot in her old life. And I remember her saying these words, "God did not want just a part of me; he wanted all of me."

We can interpret today's Gospel solely in a negative sense: Jesus demanding that we give up everything to follow him. Or we can also interpret today's Gospel in light of Jesus' cry on the cross: "I thirst! I thirst for your heart, I thirst for your love. I am the one that you were made for and I am not satisfied with only a part of you; I want all of you."

True discipleship requires detachment so that we can unite our whole heart with the Sacred Heart of our Lord

Today's Gospel is seen as Jesus' cry for our heart. He pulls no punches and sets the standard for discipleship, the standard for relationship with him extremely high: in order to be my disciple you must 1) hate your family and yes even life itself and 2) give up/renounce all your possessions

Now when Jesus says hate, we need to understand it according to the Jewish idioms of the time. 'Hate' does not mean to have anger and dislike for another person. It was an idiomatic way of saying 'to love less'.

This softens the idea in one sense but heightens it in another. It is refreshing to know that Jesus does not want us to hate our spouses, however, less is a comparative term and Jesus is telling us to love our family less THAN what? Less than himself. In other words, Jesus demands that we put him at the center of our life, at the center of our loves.

Yes, he desires that we love our families and spouses with all of our heart but he demands that they must be loved IN him and AFTER him for he desires not a part of our love but all of it. Indeed, this type of love will can cause conflict, can bring with it the suffering of the cross, yet this too is a requirement for becoming a disciple of Christ.

Furthermore, Jesus desires that we give up or renounce ALL of our possessions. What does that mean practically for us? Does Jesus literally want us to sell everything? It just started snowing outside!

For some people I would say definitely yes. For some people, Jesus has called them to a monastic or religious vocation in which they are called to sell everything. However, for some people who are called to other vocations, they are called to take care of their families or those responsible for them.

So for those of us who need to possess material things we need to ask ourselves: do we possess our material things or do they possess us?

St. John of the Cross noted that it was not enough just to be devoid of things or to lack things in order to be detached from them because the soul can still crave material things. The interior freedom from material things, "this is what leaves it free and empty of all things even though [the soul] possesses them. Since the things of the world cannot enter the soul, they are not in themselves an encumbrance or hurt to it; rather it is the will and appetite dwelling within that cause the damage when set on these things."

When we detach ourselves of worldly good it opens us up: "Since the immense blessing of God can only enter and fit in an empty and solitary heart, the Lord wants you to be alone. For he truly loves you with the desire of being himself ALL your company."

To conclude, let us heed our Lord's call to true discipleship, our Lord's call to prefer him first and to renounce the things of this world so that on the day of Christ, we will be found to not have run the race in vain, but be found as true disciples who have given their whole heart to the Lord, shining and burning with great love as bright stars in his kingdom.