**23rd Sunday Ordinary Time, Cycle. C. 2025.**

In Today’s’ Gospel, Jesus gives us some of the most challenging words in all of the Scripture: “***Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple***”. These words confront us, they unsettle us, but they also invite us to deeper reflection on what it realy means to follow Christ- not just with our lips or emotions, but with our entire lives. Jesus was speaking to a large crowd travelling with him. He turns to them and-- to us- -and lays out clearly what it takes to follow him: **total Commitment**.

**Carrying cross means-**

Choosing integrity over comfort

-Forgiving when it is hard

Loving those who don’t love us back

Sacrificing time, energy and resources for the Gospel.

Discipleship Requires Real calculation. Jesus uses two parables here: one about a man building a tower, and the other about a king preparing for war. In both cases, the emphasis is on counting the cost. Following Jesus is not a half-hearted decision. It requires reflection, sacrifice and ultimately love. This is not discouraging us from following Him, but calling us to do so with eyes wide open. Faith is not just a comfort or a tradition, its’ a transformative relationship that demands our whole lives. In other words, discipleship is not just about good intentions- it requires divine wisdom to make sense of life, to discern what really matters.

In Pauls’ letter to Philemon shows how the Gospel transforms relationships- ***Onesimus, a former slave, is “now more than a slave- a beloved brother***”. This means discipleship changes how we see others. No one is below or beneath us. In Christ are all are family.

Jesus uses bold language: hating father and mother and giving up all possessions- He wants to jolt us awake. He is not asking us to abandon our beloved ones, but to prioritize Him above all. Too often, we try to follow Christ and then cling to our comforts, status or pride. Jesus invites us to radical commitment. Just like building a tower or waging a war, following Him requires planning, sacrifice and total dedication.

Am I willing to let go of anything that comes between me and Christ?

* Do I seek God’s wisdom in my daily decisions or rely on my plans?
* - How has following Christ changed the way I treat others, especially the “least” in society?

Discipleship is not a part time job-its’ a full time life transformation. Jesus is not looking for fans or admirers, but committed followers. He doesn’t sugarcoat the cost, but He also promises that the reward is life in abundance, both now and forever.

As we receive the Eucharist today, let us ask for the courage to carry our cross daily and follow Him wholeheartedly, with wisdom, love and joyful surrender.