**“Discipleship”**

All our readings point us to, the ‘cost of discipleship.’ Our discipleship as Christians means following the message of Christ by humbling ourselves, taking up our crosses and following Him. Our crosses maybe anything that causes us discomfort in our earthly lives. They are discomforts we would naturally want to avoid at all cost. Though they might seem too heavy for us, however, with our hearts focused on Jesus, they will be as light as feathers.

In our first reading, the book Wisdom tells us to forget about our plans which at best, corrupt our soul and leads to many earthly concerns. Concerns that we cannot fully understand. She says we must give all these up as cost of discipleship to follow God who is in control of everything on earth and in heaven. Our cost of discipleship is not doing our own will, but the will of God.

In Saint Paul’s letter to Philemon, St. Paul tells Philemon that part of the cost of discipleship needed to follow Jesus, are, forgiving his slave Onesimus who ran away from him and probably stole from him. Paul went further by asking Philemon not just to forgive, but to set Onesimus free and accept him as a fellow soldier for Christ. In essence, forgiveness of others who wrong us and setting free those who are subject to us for the sake of the kingdom of God is part of our cost of discipleship.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus talked about hating or turning our backs on our parents, spouse, children, brothers, and sisters so we can become His disciples. On hearing this, our first instinct would be to say that Jesus is contradicting His commandment to love one another and not hate one another.

However, when we reflect on this teaching, we will find out that Jesus was using a typical Semitic way of making a point by the use of hyperbole or exaggeration. What Jesus wants to emphasize is that no one and nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of our Christian duty which binds us to the love of God and the love of our neighbor.

Jesus says that we who are His disciples or who want to become His disciples must understand that there is a cost of Discipleship. That the cost might include giving up our relationships with our family members and loved ones. In other words, our Christian cross as disciples of Jesus, might bring division among family members. Jesus wants us to stick to the Gospel and follow Him no matter what the cost might be.

Jesus used another example of a builder who started to build a house but did not first calculate how much it would cost to complete the project. After laying down the foundation, the builder then finds out that the cost to build the house is beyond the Builder’s reach. Jesus said, the builder would be embarrassed and laughed at by others. So will it be for those who started out not factoring into their equation the cost of having to hate family members, forsaking everything that might be in their way to fully follow Jesus.

Jesus used a third way of emphasizing His point about cost of discipleship. He tells us that to follow Him, we must be ready to do battle with the enemy. We must be ready for the hardship and suffering that would accompany our discipleship. If we are ***not*** ready, then the alternative is to surrender to the enemy even before the battle begins. What Jesus is telling us is that He is the way the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Him.

Can you imagine for a minute that you are alone on an island and you have only one bridge that connects you to the mainland to get your supply so you could survive! However, one night, hurricane Dorian comes along and wipes away the bridge. Thank God, you barely survived!

You are depressed because there is nothing else left on the island with which you could build a new bridge. However, when the cloud clears you noticed that in a short time, somebody had constructed a new beautiful bridge to connect you to the mainland! You know that you are saved!

Well, my brothers and sisters, Jesus is that new bridge that reconnects us to His Father. However, He tells us we might have to pay a price to be His follower. The one million dollar question is, are we ready to forsake everything else in other to become His disciple?

As we come to receive the true body and blood of Christ, let us ask for His grace to give up all attachments that might hinder us from following Him.