Sun July 2nd, 2023: You Cannot be Neutral about Following Christ.

There is no religious founder, or guru, or great figure in human history who is more demanding, more relentless than Jesus Christ. "If it was easy, everyone else would do it" – says ICC WOLF POINT Youth T-shirt in 2013.

In the first reading today (II Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16), the prophet Elisha received great hospitality from an elderly, childless couple who lived in Shunem. In response, Elisha promised the woman, "This time next year you will be fondling a baby son." The promise was fulfilled by God. St Paul in the second reading invites saying, "So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus". (Rom 6: 11).

Like Jesus, the worship attached to Jesus must equally be demanding. Matthew chapter 10 summarizes in away all the ethical and moral demands of Christ from believers, not only 2000 years ago, but more so today. This is the cost of real discipleship.

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it". (Matt 10: 37-39).

Is Christ here encouraging disobedience to parents or conflict at home? certainly not. Christian commitment may separate friends and loved ones. Faith in Christ demands a decision, because some will follow Christ, and some will not, conflict will inevitably arise. As we take up our cross and follow Christ, our different values, morals, and goals will set us apart from others. Christ calls us to a much higher mission than to find comfort and tranquility in this life. Love of family is a law of God, but even this love can be self-serving and used as an excuse not to serve God or do his work. Please do not neglect your family but remember that your commitment to God is even more important. God should be your first priority.

Real Christians must stand for Christ in all decisions of their lives, starting from issues around civil government, politics, capital punishments, self-defense, war, and then to divorce, marriage, abortion, poverty, wealth, business ethics, contraception, birth control, suicide, and euthanasia.

"Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me", says Christ.

To take up one's cross, and follow after Jesus Christ is very challenging, and this demands other moral and ethical choices in this life. The more we enjoy this life, the more we will discover how empty they really are. The best way to enjoy life, therefore, is to loosen our greedy grip on earthly rewards so that we can be free to follow Christ. In doing so, we will inherit eternal life.

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