

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation



September 5, 2010

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

Gospel reading

Luke 14:25-33 [*To be read aloud*]

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, “If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’ Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

Brief commentary:

This is another Lucan passage on the cost of discipleship. Today, Jesus addresses the “crowds,” not just the disciples, and in a dramatic way explains what following him entails. His words are an example of “Semitic exaggeration”, a method used frequently by teachers to stress a point. In this case, Jesus is saying that anyone or anything that stands in the way of following him must be left behind. The word “hate” should not be taken in the context of today’s culture. “Hate” in this sense means “prefer less.”* The Book of Acts, also written by Luke described the early community as people who had everything in common... (See Acts 2:44-45) This first Christians expected the quick arrival of the reign of God. It is helpful to read today’s passage in this historical context.

The two stories about the builder and the king highlight the necessity to be well prepared before undertaking a project. Being Jesus’ disciple is a difficult enterprise and he wants to make sure that those who say yes are willing to see it through.

**The Colleague Bible Commentary, 1992.*

Today’s reading offers three significant messages:

- Discipleship calls for a radical commitment of the total person.
- Following the gospel values requires an evaluation of all our relationships and possessions. Nothing should separate us from our relationship with God.
- “Giving up” also includes power, control and prestige.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. How does my lifestyle show that I am a disciple of Jesus? Explain.
2. Do I really understand what discipleship demands? Am I being invited to surrender anything to God today?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 520-521; 618; 1618; 2544-2545.