

“Who has known the mind of the Lord?”

When faced with difficult choices, either choosing between two goods, or taking the harder road, we may ask ourselves this question: what would the Lord want me to do? Maybe this sort of thinking is a little presumptuous or too dangerous, open for exploitation by unperceptive minds. The idea of trying to know how God might want us to think and act when facing life’s problems can be like building one’s house on a pile of sand, uncertain and shaky.

Thus, many of us turn to the structures and systems around us to help make decisions. However, not all structures and systems follow the moral framework provided by our faith in Jesus Christ. It is a timely reminder that the Catholic faith has a robust and healthy moral framework, built on the Gospels and the teachings of the Church. Living out the moral life is precisely answering one’s call to holiness. We are reminded today that our faith must be made manifest in good works. Likewise, our good works must be motivated by our faith. To be a follower of Jesus is to be more than just an upright citizen. It is a constant discerning of perspective, asking ourselves what God is wanting us to do even if it means suffering and pain. St Paul encourages us to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (12:1-2). We witness this reality in the Gospel, when after revealing to his disciples the events of his Passion and death, Peter in an emotional outburst forbids Jesus to go to Jerusalem. To this Jesus notably responds, “Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God’s way but man’s.” The dialogue between Jesus and Peter provides the key to understanding one of Jesus’ famous sayings: “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it”. This is the start of the deeper way to discerning what God wants from us, this is the reasoning of God; the way of the Lord.

When we make decisions, big or small, we approach them with desires and ambition in mind. Peter is trying to preserve Jesus, whereby Jesus can lead the new (worldly) revolution. The reality of Jesus’ suffering and death would be counterintuitive to his campaign. Although Peter’s reasoning was understandable and safe, it wasn’t the way of the Lord; he wasn’t thinking like Jesus.

We might reflect that the perspective of the Lord is ‘upside down’: Jesus is inviting us into a kingdom that is not temporal but eternal. It is a kingdom where death is not the end but an encounter with the Lord; a kingdom that is not shut but open to receive those willing to believe and follow. In this way we gaze upon Jesus’ death not as a defeat but as a triumph. We gaze upon our very own crosses not so as to avoid but to embrace. To know what God wants from us is to let his life become ours. When it does, our decisions have a heavenly outlook in mind. Our desires and ambitions become more like Jesus’, that is, to be with our Father in heaven. Configuring our lives to Christ takes practice, and a lot of hard work, but let’s not give up especially during these troubled times where we are constantly reminded of our mortality. Let us keep taking up our crosses, knowing that every step forward is one closer to Christ. Thus, when making decisions, pause, breathe and discern from a heavenly outlook, then act in good faith that all you do is for God’s greater glory.