

## **2 July 2017 (13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)**

2Kings 4:8-11,13-16; Psalm 88(89):2-3,16-19; Romans 6:3-4,8-11; Matthew 10:37-42.

### **Take up your cross and follow me!**

To be a Christian and a follower of Jesus Christ is not an easy choice. The Jewish Christian community, for whom the gospel according to Matthew was written, knew this very well. Last week we heard Jesus tell his disciples not to be afraid because God himself was going to be looking after those who choose to follow Jesus. In today's reading Jesus challenges the disciples to take up their cross and continue following him.

The call of the Christian is to be a disciple, to commit oneself to getting to know Jesus intimately and to always put Jesus first in his/her daily life. Jesus needs to be at the very centre of the disciple's life and every action needs to start in Christ. Jesus' teachings need to be the filter through which we see the world around us. Christ needs to be first followed by everything else.

Jesus asks his disciples to prefer him even before our own parents and our own children; a very difficult proposal to make! Jesus does not tell us not to love or spend time with our families and those closest to us; rather he invites us to love them through him and because of him, as if we are loving Jesus himself! Every one of our loves, preferences and intentions needs to be coloured by the love of Christ.

Jesus does not promise it is an easy choice. The Christians in the community of Matthew knew that the decision to become a Christian often put one into direct conflict with other members of their family. This is the burden / cross Jesus is referring to in the gospel. There is a cross we have to carry as a result of our decision to follow Jesus.

The true disciple leaves everything behind and follows Jesus totally. If the disciples change their mind each time a difficulty arises, then one wonders how strong was their initial decision to follow Jesus! Once a decision is made Jesus asks us to follow through with it; to pick up our cross and continue faithfully in our discipleship.

The image of the cross evokes a large measure of difficulty; Jesus himself died on his cross because he continued to speak the good news. We are aware that our decision to be disciples is a burden that we need to take up, however our following of Jesus brings with it inner joys. The cross of Christ is also a symbol of the victory; the cross leads to the resurrection that we experience in different moments of our life.

The disciples who faithfully take up their cross and follow Jesus, become witnesses to the good news and draw others to be disciples of Jesus. The question we need to ask ourselves today is: how well do we carry our cross of discipleship? How faithful am I to my call to be a disciple. Upon reflecting on our life in Christ we may discover that often we may have not been faithful in our following of Christ. This may often bring with it feelings of dejection. When we realised that we have failed all we have to do is to seek to be reconciled once again with God and to take up our journey once again. The disciple is invited to be faithful to his journey regardless of the many falls.

Let us continue on our journey.

Fr Mario