

Reflection

- If we want to be a true follower of Jesus, the Lord made it pretty clear what we need to do: love God with all our hearts and love others. Yet in today's Gospel we hear Jesus talk about hating. Hating others, even family, and hating ourselves. He also talks about renouncing all of our possessions. These words seem to contradict the command to love. So, what is Jesus really telling us in today's Gospel passage.
- First off Jesus is not telling us to hate our family and friends. When Jesus uses the word "hate" He doesn't mean we are to be unloving or heartless toward others.
- But Jesus is telling us that no relationship is to be more important than our relationship with Him; not father, mother, wife, husband, or child.
- Jesus cautions us that, at times, people can distract us from carrying out God's will. The person who is always negative and tries to bring you there too. The people who gossip or abuse drugs and alcohol and try to lead us in those directions. Some people can give us advice, opinions, or comfort that goes against what the Holy Spirit is leading us to. Even Friends and family can try to convince us that something "isn't that bad," or that we can do something that we know in our hearts would be wrong for us as a disciple. When that happens we must realize our relationship with God is more important than our relationship with others (even those closest to us) and we must put our discipleship above all else.

- Next, Jesus is not telling us to hate ourselves. Throughout scripture Jesus tells us we are precious to God; our bodies are temples where the Holy Spirit dwells.
- But Jesus is cautioning us about our human condition. Often there are things that we need to give up that have nothing to do with other people. When we see how lazy we are, or how stubborn, or how selfish, or how proud we are, then isn't that something that we need to hate? Don't we need to love Jesus more than these things so that we can follow Him and learn self-control, love, humility, gentleness, etc. from Him?
- And Jesus knows it is in our nature to let our thoughts distract us from being good disciples. Worries and anxiety about money, health, jobs, etc...; all thoughts that creep in and steal our time and attention. I bet many of us here during Mass this morning have let our minds wander to these thoughts. I admit I just did during 1st reading. Jesus tells us over and over get rid of those anxious thoughts. Do not be afraid. Trust God will provide exactly what we need. Remember, we have a God who took 5 loaves and two fish and fed 5,000 people. He will take care of us!
- The Lord tells us put these worries and anxious thoughts in proper place. Sure, there may be things we care about or must tend to but don't let the anxious thought own you. Don't let it **steal** your prayer time, or the time you could spend reaching out to help and serve others.
- The Lord is not telling us to hate ourselves, He created us! What He is telling us is to hate the fact we can make worldly

things and wants and worries more important than carrying out God's will. Hate the fact we can be more concerned about ourselves than others. Hate the fact we can place God second. Hate these things so much you reject them, you die to them and become a new person.

- And finally, in today's Gospel Jesus is not saying give everything you own away.
- But Jesus is telling us no possession, no career or job or work is to be more important than doing God's will. Here Jesus uses the word "renounce". The biblical meaning of renounce is; 'Refuse to follow or obey'. With that definition we can better understand Jesus' command to renounce our possessions. We are to stop obeying the things we own. Stop following after things. In other words, it's ok to own things but don't let things own you. Don't let things distract or hinder you from your call to follow Jesus. Don't let the work, the computer, the sports, the desire for that next thing -fill your day, fill your life so much - that they steal your time. Your time for prayer. Your time to reach out in love and service to others.
- What the Lord speaks about in today's Gospel is putting things in their right order: giving God and God's will priority above everything else in our lives.
- This can be hard for us to hear. You might be thinking right now "that's impossible, I can't do it". That reaction is normal, we are used to giving ourselves completely to our loved ones (especially our children) and we are conditioned to acquiring things and working toward our goals

- But get past that first reaction. Really think about it. **Putting God first**. It's not that hard and it makes perfect sense. **Everything we have**, the people, the things in our lives, our own lives are given to us as a gift, from God. **It all comes from Him**. How could we not love Him most for providing us with these things we cherish?
- Think about it, when we put God first, spend time with God and listen for His voice- What does He really tell us:
- I love you dearly, you are precious to me. You are my children. Go and love each other. Take care of each other. Use the gifts and talents I have given you to make life better for each other. Bring my love to everyone and lead them to me. Help them know me. I know it will be hard work at times – but I will be there with you.
- Nothing suffers or is neglected when we put God first. It only gets better. Better than we could hope or dream for. It's not losing anything- its gaining everything. That is what we are called to when Jesus calls us to be His disciples.
- The real challenge for us is figuring out how to live out our response to Jesus call in our day to day lives. It starts by recognizing **that** the opportunities to bring God's love and to lead others closer to God are most often right in front of us. Our marriages, our families, our friends, our jobs, our Church – these are the places we live out our call to be disciples. St. Therese wrote, "Grow where you are planted".
- We can preach, tell people about God. How wonderful and loving He is.

- We can teach: Showing God's love in action. We can be kind, patient, choose good words, be honest, hardworking, humble. We can invite others to come join us at Mass and Holy Eucharist.
- We live among thousands of people, we know hundreds. They watch us, learn from us, and form opinions about us. There are countless ways to teach them about God and His love by our actions.
- We can be **healers**: We can do something each day to change someone's life for the better. There are hundreds of ways to do this. Visiting the sick and homebound, giving food to those who are hungry.
- There are people with no hopes, no dreams. People struggling with depression – we can talk and listen and be there. We can encourage them, pray with them. All are ways to bring God's healing love. All do-able.
- Answering Jesus' call to be a disciple, means really, really seeing yourself in this role of bringing Christ to others, letting Jesus **use you** to reveal His presence in the world.
- Whether you're a priest, deacon, husband wife, parent, child, religious – whatever. Being a disciple of Jesus means to **live that life with a passion**, a **fire**, a **purpose** of being God's presence in the world.
- Cardinal Newman wrote a wonderful prayer asking God to help him lose his life in order to find real life. I'd like to conclude with part of that prayer. • Dear Lord, flood my soul with your spirit and life. Possess my whole being so

completely that all my life may be only a reflection of You.
Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in
contact with may feel your presence in my soul. Let them
look up and no longer see me, but only you. Amen