Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



(Unsplash/Amanda Yum)



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13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Jesus calls his followers and entrusts them with his mission. At the same time, however, he warns them of the demands it entails and of the total commitment required to carry it out. Thus, in today's Gospel, he sets forth radical and uncompromising demands.

The first is not to place love for parents or children ahead of discipleship. Of course, Jesus is not devaluing familial love. Rather, by drawing this contrast, he underscores the importance of the mission entrusted to his followers and how it calls for the utmost dedication and generosity.

A second demand is to take up the cross and follow him. Here, it is important to clarify that Jesus is not asking for sacrifice or even the risking of one's life in the sense of self-offering without purpose, as though he desired suffering and death. Although at certain times a spirituality of sacrifice has been promoted, this arose from a mistaken understanding of Christ's cross, as if God loved suffering so much that he did not spare his own son from it.

Our contemporary understanding allows us to see that the cross is the consequence of a life willing to denounce evil, even when doing so disturbs those who seek to promote it for personal gain. Jesus was put to death by his contemporaries because of his prophetic witness, because he denounced everything that was contrary to the reign of God, even when such realities were endorsed by the religious institutions of his time.

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In that same sense, Jesus calls us not to fear persecution for the sake of goodness, as he taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:11). To take up the cross is to follow him faithfully without betraying the message of the reign of God.

It is precisely a life of faithful discipleship that can lead others to recognize Jesus and welcome him. In this way, they too receive God's gift in their lives, and goodness and compassion are multiplied throughout the history we are living.

The Gospel concludes by referring to giving water to one of these little ones because they are his disciples, reminding us that the centrality of the poor in the reign of God will always be the distinguishing mark of authentic discipleship.

May Jesus find in us a willingness to follow him wholeheartedly. In this way, many others may come to know him, and the fruits of God's reign may abound.

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