

Doing small things with Great love: - Christian commitment

Readings : Wisdom 9:13-18 Philemon 9-10, 12-17 Luke 14:25-33

A few days before the execution of St. Thomas More his wife visited him in prison and pleaded before him. She said, " Why don't you think about me and your children? Why can't you escape from this terrible fate? You can easily do that by obeying the royal order and confessing that you were wrong in going against the will of the king". Thomas More replied, " Yes, I can easily do that but I will never do that. For I love my nation and its king. I love my wife and children. But above all I love and fear God. If I escape the execution by giving testimony against my conscience that will be against the will of God. I would rather like to be executed than to go against the will of God".

If anyone comes after me, Jesus tells us in today's Gospel, without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Is that good news? Can Jesus really be serious?

In this passage hating, for Jesus, meant simply **detaching oneself** from someone or something. What he was really saying is that the Father must come first. That is how Jesus himself lived. Even at age twelve, Jesus put his love for his heavenly Father ahead of his love for Mary and Joseph by staying behind in Jerusalem after his earthly parents had left. Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?

Commitment to God and his will must be the first priority of each and every disciple of Jesus. Commitment is a gradual ongoing process which has many stages of maturity.

Television's Phil Donahue says that commitment is made up of three stages.

First, there is the fun stage. That's when we go out and say, "I love doing this. Why didn't I get involved sooner?"

Second, there is the intolerant stage. That's when we go out and say, "Anyone who doesn't get involved isn't really a true Christian."

Finally, there is the reality stage. That's when we suddenly realize that our involvement is going to make only a microscopic dent in the problems of our world. And that's the stage at which saints are made.

Today we witnessed on the Television the canonization of Mother Teresa. She is a impeccable example of placing God in the first place in our contemporary civilization.

A favorite motto of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata was: "**Do small things with great love.**"

But the "small things" she did so captivated the world that she was showered with honorary degrees and other awards, almost universally praised by the media and sought out by popes, presidents, philanthropists and other figures of wealth and influence.

Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway, Dec. 10, 1979, she accepted it "in the name of the hungry, of the naked, of the homeless, of the blind, of the lepers, of all those who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society." She also condemned abortion as the world's greatest destroyer of people.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan presented her with the presidential Medal of Freedom at the White House, he called her a "heroine of our times" and noted that the plaque honoring her described her as the "saint of the gutters." He also joked that Mother Teresa might be the first award recipient to take the plaque and melt it down to get money for the poor.

In addition to winning the Nobel Peace Prize, Mother Teresa was given Pope John XXIII Peace Prize in 1971; the Templeton Prize in 1973; the John F. Kennedy International Award in 1971; the \$300,000 Balzan Prize for Humanity, Peace and Brotherhood in 1979; the Congressional Gold Medal in 1997; and dozens of other awards and honors, including one of India's highest – the Padmashri Medal.

She founded the sisters of charity. The members of the congregation take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but the vow of poverty is stricter than in other congregations because, as Mother Teresa explained, "to be able to love the poor and know the poor, we must be poor ourselves." In addition, the Missionaries of Charity – sisters and brothers – take a fourth vow of "wholehearted and free service to the poorest of the poor." These vows are the sign of detachment which Jesus is saying to us in today's Scripture.

Mother Teresa and her professed sisters could do this because they were committed and determined to the call to serve God by serving the poor.

We can also do small things with great love. that love is the commitment Jesus is looking in each of his followers.

Let's close with a prayer that Charlie DeLeo wrote. It sums up the challenge of today's Scripture readings:

O Lord, I don't ever expect to have the faith of Abraham,

Nor do I, O Lord, ever expect to have the leadership of Moses,

Nor the strength of Samson, nor the courage of David . . . nor the wisdom of Solomon. . . .

But what I do expect, O Lord, is your calling on me some day.

What is your will, I shall do, what is your command shall be my joy. . . .

And I shall not fail you, O Lord, for you are all I seek to serve.'