

Luke 14: 25-33

25 Large crowds were walking with Jesus, so he turned to tell them, "If anyone joins me without relativizing the bonds with his father or mother or his wife or his children or his brothers or sisters, or even with his own life, he will be unable to remain my disciple. 27 Whoever does not accept to carry the cross that is his and follow me, will be unable to remain my disciple. 28 For example, who of you, when you want to build a tower, does not first take the time to sit down and calculate the costs, to see if you have what you need to go at the end, 29 and to avoid that after laying the foundation and finding yourself unable to complete it, those who see will begin to mock you, 30 saying, "This man began to build, but he was unable to go all the way." 31 Or again, what king, gone to war against another king, do not first take the time to sit down to determine whether he is able with his ten thousand men to confront someone who will launch on him twenty thousand men. 32 If this is not the case, even if he is still far away, he will inquire about the conditions for making peace by sending an embassy. 33 In the same way, whoever among you does not know how to distance himself from all his possessions, will be unable to remain my disciple."

Gospel commentary - Homily

Passionate love

Here is a passage from the Gospels that is not easy to understand at first, which seems hard, and even repulsive, especially in the official translation: "Who does not prefer me to his family, to his spouse and even to his own life can not be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his cross and who does not give up all his possessions, can not be my disciple." Our first reaction could be to say, "Unless you become a monk, how can you live that?" But our instinct lets us feel that there may be something else to discover. What is the key to this passage?

After looking for a long time to understand this passage, it was in the life of a couple that I found the images that could enlighten me the most. When two beings decide to unite their destiny, should not they distance themselves from family ties? From now on, the bonds that unite them will take precedence over everything. They will also have to tear themselves away from their old habits of singles to think in terms of two people: one can no longer make a decision alone. It is the same with possessions: what was mine will become what is ours. Money is a terrible revelator, and a lot of couples' life runs aground on this pitfall. But is it so painful to distance oneself from family ties, to give up a form of individual freedom and to share all one's property? In any case, at home, it was done in love, and many people could also testify that they found a new freedom and richness.

I find that this face of the life of a couple helps to shed light on this radical word of Jesus. Just as, without the passion of love that goes so far as to share everything, a couple will not be able to overcome the test of time, so will it be of the one who calls himself a Christian if he does not live a similar bond with Jesus, to the point of spreading through every aspect of his life.

As a Christian, I have no memory of having to cut a relationship in the name of my faith. It is true that my area of action is a hundred miles from the Hell's Angels or some criminal group. Even if in some parts of the world we work at the service of the Gospel at the risk of our lives, here in North America, we rarely come into these situations. However, in the society that is mine, I am surrounded by models of what is "successful life", what "happiness" is, what "my concerns" should be, and this is off what the Gospel tells me. Also, without listening again and again to Jesus' teaching, I would have the feeling that my life is a kind of failure, and at least it is very boring. Putting the human person and his development at the center of our concerns is to distance oneself from the surrounding world. But is it so difficult when one is inhabited by love?

As much as the possessions are a powerful indicator for the health of the couple, as much they are for the health of Christian life. By possessions, I mean everything: money, talent, time. In our society, money not only allows to give free rein to all our desires, real or imaginary, but it allows to reach a social status. Talent has become a marketable commodity: one only has to think of professional sports or computer geniuses in the new economy. And there is time, that we manage as well as badly, and that reveals where our heart is. In the same way that conjugal love touches all these dimensions, so is the bond with Jesus?

The image of the "cross we carry" picks up all that has just been said. Note that this is not a crucifixion, but a step forward, where we assume all that constitutes our being and bring it to a new place. When a mother chooses to love her adolescent and rebellious children to the end, and to seek all possible ways of accompaniment, is she not on the path of passion, i.e. passionate love? When a woman intervenes energetically in the alcoholism of her spouse, or her subjection to pornography on the Internet, is she not on the path of passion? When an employer looks for ways to get an employee to give the best of himself, without lying or cheating, is he not on the path of passion?

The Evangelist Luke spoke to all those Christians who asked for baptism and said to them, "If the love lit by Jesus is not a true passion, you will not be able to hold to the end." It is the same word that he addresses to us today.

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, April 2001

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