

The Cost of Discipleship

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

A young entrepreneur had built a thriving business from the ground up. His name was respected in his industry, and he enjoyed the fruits of his success such as travel, influence, and financial security. But over time, something unsettled him. He began volunteering at a local shelter on weekends. What started as a charitable gesture became a spiritual awakening. He sensed God calling him to something more, not just to write checks, but to reorder his entire life. Eventually, he sold the company, downsized his lifestyle, and committed himself full-time to nonprofit work. Many thought he was foolish. But in his own words, "I finally stopped building for myself and started building for the Kingdom."

This story mirrors the radical invitation Jesus issues in today's Gospel. As crowds follow him, he turns and delivers a startling message: "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

Strong words. Jarring, even. But Jesus isn't promoting hatred; he's using the language of hyperbole, a common Jewish teaching method, to emphasize a deeper truth: nothing, not even the closest of human relationships, can take priority over our relationship with him. To "hate" in this context means to prefer less. Jesus is asking us to love him first, so that all other loves can flow rightly from that foundation.

This echoes the ancient Shema, the heart of Jewish prayer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5). Discipleship isn't an add-on; it's a total reorientation.

Jesus makes this clear with two examples: a man building a tower and a king going to war. Both must first count the cost. So must we. Christianity is not comfortable or convenient; it demands sacrifice. It asks us to pick up our cross daily, to relinquish control, and to be prepared to lose everything for Christ.

Pope Benedict XVI once wrote: "He calls people of all times to count exclusively on him, to leave everything else behind, so as to be totally available for him, and hence totally available for others: to create oases of selfless love in a world where so often only power and wealth seem to count for anything."

Following Christ does not mean we love our families or our vocations any less. It means we love them better, because we love them through Him. Christ brings clarity, direction, and divine purpose to every other relationship and pursuit.

So, the question this Gospel demands of us is not rhetorical. It is deeply personal: If Jesus asked you to let go of the one thing you cling to most, would you?

Yours in Christ,

Father Rudy