

### **Thirteen Sunday Year A. 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023. We must take up our cross and follow Jesus.**

It was St. Augustine of Hippo who said: “You had made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.” This statement of St. Augustine is true of our Christian journey: we will continue to struggle to acquire the things of this world, yet our heart goes without rest and fulfillment. To be fulfilled, we must go beyond ordinary material possessions.

A true disciple of Christ is one who denies himself /herself everything for the sake of the gospel; Christ says it clearly in today’s gospel that ‘He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me... He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me’ To be worthy of Christ, requires us to detach from everything else but attach ourselves to Jesus Christ alone. Any attachment to material things disqualifies us from being a true disciple.

Christ is not saying we should not have material things, but we should put God first before all these. Detachment could mean our ability to share what we have with others, loving others rather than self, and focusing on the spiritual instead of the flesh. In our first reading a woman of **Shunem** shared what she had with a prophet, and she gained more than what she gave. The same with us, anytime we offer something good to people of God, that gesture will never go unrewarded. Anytime we plan a seed for the kingdom’s sake, we shall be rewarded; anytime we observe the tradition of tithing, our reward goes up to 100% as well as the kingdom of God. Let us ask ourselves: how generous am I to my priests, Deacons, Catechists/ Evangelists and religious? There is the temptation that many will render help only to the Priests and deny others who also work in the vineyard. Our generosity must cut across.

**We are told that, ‘He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for my sake will find it’, Matt 10: 39.**

In as much as the workers in the vineyard receive from the faithful, they too are expected to share from what God has bless them with. The life of a priest and other ministers should be like the candle that burns away everyday at the altar to give light to others.

Jesus lived a life of total availability and became compassionate and healing shoulder for other to lean on; how often do we make effort so that others may lean on us? It is unfortunate sometimes the prophet or men of God are very selfish, we do not share or make sacrifices with our resources and time, we only make time for what would benefit us alone. We prefer our candle to be kept unlit so that it may not finish. Those who gave themselves for the service of God must be aware that their lives are like a candle that burns away everyday at alter. I wish to end with these quotations:

**John Rose.** He said Human generosity ‘will always be rewarded with the divine superabundance’. Hoarding anything selfishly is always counterproductive. If water is hoarded, it breeds mosquitoes. If food is hoarded it develops mucus. If clothes are packed in one place, it attracts rats. If money is hoarded, termites or enemies will eat it. The famous preacher **Christmas Evans** said, ‘It is better to burn out than to rust out’. **St Francis of Assisi** said: ‘It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is in giving that we do receive, and it is in dying that we are born to life’. True discipleship has its costs and gains. Happy Sunday to you all.

Peace,

Fr. Jingbe Simon