

23RD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME – YEAR C

The words of today's Gospel are among the most challenging we hear from the lips of Jesus, "Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14: 27.) Over recent Sundays we have been challenged in a variety of ways by Jesus, culminating in his words to us today. The true meaning and cost of discipleship is spelled out for us. The way of discipleship is the way of the Cross. Jesus' advice for those considering this path, is to think carefully, because it might cost them everything.

Across the centuries many followers of Jesus have embraced the cross of suffering. They have accepted rejection, ridicule, persecution and even martyrdom for Christ. Even today, many of our brothers and sisters continue to make such sacrifices. What makes their sacrifice possible, is a singular love and devotion to Jesus.

Scholars teach us that when Jesus speaks of hating our family members and our own lives too, we should not take his words literally. This is a Semitic expression which is better understood as meaning, 'to love less'. We must love everything less than we love Jesus. If we do not, we are not worthy of him and cannot be his disciples.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that, "Christ is the centre of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social." (CCC 1618) See also (CCC 2544).

While the sacrifice may be great, the reward is infinitely greater, because the reward is Christ.