

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily  
Sunday, September 4, 2022  
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle C

This Sunday we are in for hard words, hard sayings from Jesus. Jesus is telling us that if we choose to become his disciples, there are demands and conditions. His love is free but if we follow him, his demand is absolute – our whole heart and soul. This shows that Jesus is no ordinary teacher. Only God demands the same things as Jesus does in the account we have heard.

Let us look at Jesus and see why he makes demands on us. Does he have the right to do so? There are people who have no right to demand the total obedience and allegiance of others because they themselves do not live up the ideals they uphold. But Jesus has a right to set conditions because we know that he was the first to show unconditional absorption to the will of his Father. His demands on us are great but he was stricter by far to himself.

Every religion lives by certain requirements. There are rules one has to keep. I remember our seminary was hosting a meal for people from other religions. We hosted the inter-religious dialogue at that time. It was a headache for the cook. There must not be pork for the Muslim couple. The Hindu family will only eat the bread if they were sure no egg was used. The Buddhist monks were asking whether garlic was placed with vegetables. And this was just about food.

Notice the demands of Jesus. They were not about the externals. Not about food or drink, not about rituals, not about attire. Rather, they point to the response of the heart. A true disciple follows Jesus by surrendering his heart to him. Only Jesus, therefore, emerges as the priority of one's life. One's family, relationships, possessions, and personal joy are pursued only because of the Lord and in the spirit of the Lord.

It is said that Mother or St. Teresa, who, after following Jesus in life of service and poverty, had to go through the cross of interior suffering, interior pain and trials until

the day she died. But she did not withdraw her love and fidelity. She continued to love and serve and smile even as she suffered much.

Today, many will come to the Lord to surrender only their problems. But God desires that we surrender to him everything. He desires to see us offering our life, our jobs, our friendships, our possessions to him. We must not be afraid to lose these things because God knows what is best for us. Let us ask God for the courage to be truly his disciples by the constant surrender of our heart.