

## HOMILY – 13<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C 2016

It was Fr George's birthday, and the parish community decided to give him a new suit.

He was so touched by the gift that the following Sunday he stood before everyone and, with tears in his eyes, announced, "Today I will be preaching to you in my birthday suit."

During the Civil War, Lincoln was often criticized for not being severe enough on the soldiers of the South. On one occasion after a battle, a General from the North asked him, "Why didn't you destroy the enemy when you had the chance? President Lincoln answered with words adapted from the today's Gospel passage: "Do I not destroy my enemy by making him my friend?" That is exactly what Jesus tells us in today's Gospel: destroy our enemies by making them our friends. No doubt the feelings of anger and resentment run deep in many hearts today, and we wouldn't mind if people who hurt us deeply were punished or suffered from bad luck. Jesus, however, says: "That is not my Spirit".

In the second part of today's Gospel, Luke introduces three potential disciples who offered lame reasons that made Jesus' call to ministry "impossible" for them to accept, after Jesus had told them plainly what the commitment required and the cost involved. As a student I was really surprised at Jesus' sharp response to these three young men since I did not understand what Jesus was expecting from them.

Undoubtedly, Jesus have seen more deeply into the man's heart than we can. Jesus was simply honest about the demands and the cost of a commitment that a journey we might undertake too easily.

The first response "Let the dead bury their dead" may sound too harsh. But this man's father was not dead or sick. He simply wished to stay home with his

father until his death. Jesus knew that later he would find another reason to delay the call.

Jesus did not want another would-be follower to go home and bid farewell to his dear ones. Hence, Jesus rebukes him saying that the plowman must look ahead rather than back. Looking back while plowing causes crooked lines in the field.

To the third person Jesus was asking to 'count the cost' first before he takes a rash decision to follow him. For every disciple of Jesus, it is a requirement to define his/her relationship to this world. Indirectly Jesus was coming to his point that 'a person who loves the world' cannot follow his footsteps.

Those three young men were found unfit and unprepared to follow Jesus as his disciples. It is us today who represent those three young men with our twofold commitments: our Christian commitment and Marital commitment.

In our real world all are afraid of the word 'commitment'. It is from the fear to make a commitment many decides to live together rather than getting married, and many turn away from priestly and religious vocations. The cost of Jesus' discipleship is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. So Jesus' words stand the same for ever "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me".

Whenever we live not for ourselves, but by a committed service to God's people and our family, we are denying ourselves and following Jesus' command 'to follow me'. This secular world has made it nearly impossible to follow Jesus without the help from above. So today let us humbly ask the Holy Spirit to lead us always, especially at times of our challenges and temptations.