

# *Conditions of discipleship*

Homily, 26th June, 2016

Luke 9,51-62

father G. Paparone o.p.

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In the Gospel of John, we read a statement that one day Jesus made to his listeners who were urging him, especially the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus made a statement that should somewhat be the lighthouse in our lives as believers: *I did not come into this world to be judgmental, to sentence, but to save.*

*Those who do not believe will not embrace my teachings and are therefore already doomed.*

*And the sentence is the following: the light came to this world, yet men liked darkness better than light.* (See. John 3,17; 12,47).

My most beloved, we should always have this basic teaching in front of our eyes of faith, our spiritual eyes, before considering and set out with our life as believers.

What do I mean by this?

**That Jesus is an opportunity granted to us!**

**The opportunity of experiencing life in a different way than the one made by man, an option.**

Saint Paul reminds us the same teaching of the beginning of this short excerpt from the beautiful letter to the Galatians: ***Brothers, Christ freed us for freedom!*** (Gal 5,1).

One may wonder: well, what does it mean “he freed us for freedom”?

It means that **Christ freed us**, with no price to pay, which means he won over the enemy who tempts and keeps on threatening our lives, **to allow us to live in freedom.**

**This means that faith is an introduction to an experience of freedom.**

Therefore, - Saint Paul says – beware not to fall back into Law.

What does it mean to “fall back into Law”?

This simply means setting up a relationship with God based on abiding to the rules, regulations, prayers, good deeds as well which indeed do to go deep into our hearts and cannot free them!

Do you understand?

**Christ came to free us from the power of evil that inhabits our lives.**

Saint Paul here reminds us about it very clearly: please beware! Do not get the game of Law imposed on to you again. *Live according to Spirit*, because the Spirit has a completely different dynamics to flesh.

*Flesh experiences desires completely against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.* (Gal 5,17).

Therefore, in the light of this perspective and of this wonderful gift we are all not aware of, that one

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must interpret, read and embrace the tough teaching from the Gospel.  
A Gospel otherwise impossible to understand and not in harmony with Jesus' teachings.

Jesus said to a man: *follow me*, and that man answered: *Lord, first let me go and bury my father*. And Jesus said to him: *let the dead bury their own dead*.

It is clear that we should not take this example to its letter, but we must understand it within its spiritual value which is tougher than an interpretation to the letter itself.  
Indeed, it may be easier to let relations bury father rather than living this exacting word by God according to which **He must rank first!**

**We must give priority to God in our lives!**

**Priority must be given to a mindset, a way of living that is an option, as I was saying, in this world!**

This can be taken also from the first part of the passage that we have just heard: while the days of His passion were passing, Jesus is going to Jerusalem where he will die and sends messengers to the Samaritans who do welcome him.

What do his disciples say, then?

*Would you want us to let fire burn, would you want us to start destroying...?*

Our Lord looks at them and reprimands them: you still have understood nothing, have you?

**Have you not yet understood that I did not come into this world to be judgmental, to sentence but to save?**

Christ is an opportunity granted to us.

If you host me, I grant my life, my grace, my help...

Those who refuse me, refuse those who already sentenced by themselves...

My most beloved, I know this teaching is not an easy one.

Because, we are used to live our religiousness that is functional to ourselves, no matter the level we wish to interpret it.

I would like that today you may go home with this thought:

**but, the religion, the religiousness I live,  
is it functional to myself, or is it indeed giving yourself to God?**

Indeed, God also wishes to give something to us.

Yet, we can fully make our humanity, our life, to the extent that we somewhat forget about ourselves and entrust our life and its coming into being to Jesus.

**This is the meaning of being saved.**

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**This is the meaning of walking and following our Lord.**

This, for instance, is the meaning of the other statement, a tough one, that we heard last Sunday: *those who wish to save their life will lose. Yet, those who will lose their life for me, will find it.* (Luke 9,24).

To make a psalm or a teaching from the *Didache* contemporary:

we, every single day, are confronted with two ways, two choices: man, in spite of his troubles, always live only within a binary system:

- either we follow life, or death
- either we follow what is good, or what is evil
- either we follow the truth, or a lie...

There is no third way, it simply does not exist!

There are two ways, (one being) the way to **our commitment to the truth.**

Then, it is clear that we cannot always live it, we are not consistent, we are going to be contradictory, but this does not matter....

Our Lord does not expect us to already be able to fully live into truth, as much as He never expected his apostles to do so.

They did not understand anything and He has silenced them and kept on having them beside Him, He gave them teachings.

**Yet, what is the Apostles' strength?**

**They lend themselves to continuously be changed by Jesus, let themselves be corrected....**

**Why?**

**Because they had only this urge into their hearts: follow our Lord, have Him become their priority!**

Because the entire faith, the whole religion, as Jesus said, can be summed up in just one commandment:

***Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind!***

And, then, Love your neighbour as yourself.. (Cf. Mat 22,37-39).

First, one must love God, then comes the love for ourselves, **in God.**

Then, let us ask our Lord, as I said at the beginning, to help us understand that he did not come to impose onto us a new burden, as Saint Paul points out; He came to grant us freedom; yet, this freedom that Gods wishes to give us as His gift is always at risk...

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Because the *flesh*, day in day out, tempts our freedom!  
The *flesh* and the *world* want to grab back what belongs to them!

**Then, we must fight against this temptation day in day out!**

Praying serves this purpose!

Not to pay a toll to God, but rather to keep on remembering God, His words and ask His daily help, so that our intelligence and our will be free from the hints of evil.

Praised be Jesus Christ.