

A TRUE DISCIPLE IMITATES JESUS IN EVERYTHING

Have you noticed how demanding Jesus is with those He calls to follow Him as his disciples? Here are some examples: "If you want to follow me, DENY YOURSELF, PICK UP YOUR CROSS DAILY, THEN COME AND FOLLOW ME!" - To those who said "we will follow you wherever you go..." Jesus replied "foxes have holes, birds have their nests, but the SON OF MAN HAS NOWHERE TO LAY HIS HEAD" (in other words, "don't expect a comfortable life...") - To his closest disciples he gave the warning: "A pupil is not above the Master. They hate me, they will hate you too; they persecute me, they will persecute you too..." - "THOSE WHO WANT TO SAVE THEIR LIFE IN THIS WORLD, WILL LOSE IT. THOSE WHO LOSE THEIR LIFE FOR MY SAKE WILL FIND IT!"

We could go on and on, from cover to cover in the New Testament... Yet, those who followed Him to the end, who experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they voluntarily gave up their profession, confidently denied themselves material comforts, daily picked up their cross, gladly gave up their life in this world, and found it worth suffering like Him, because they believed Jesus' promise of TRUE JOY here on earth and of eternal life!

After meeting the risen Jesus on his way to Damascus, Saul, known as Paul, courageously preached Jesus and him crucified, to the point of boasting about suffering what was lacking in Christ's mystical Body. What's more, in writing to the Philippians (2:1-11) Paul urges the Christians of Philippi to share in his own JOY by adopting the same attitudes that were in Christ, who, though he was God, he did not exploit his equality with God, but emptied himself of everything, and made himself small, weak, servant, and even died horribly on the cross, but because of it He was exalted as LORD by the FATHER!

Thus Paul reveals to us the secret path to true joy and fulfillment: GIVE UP EVERYTHING FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, INCLUDING EARTHLY LIFE, IN ORDER TO GAIN EVERYTHING, ESPECIALLY ETERNAL LIFE!

I INVITE YOU TO READ PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS, CHAPTER 2, VERSES 1-11. Look for it in the New Testament of your Bible, or find it in the internet. It will reveal the heart of Paul and the heart of Jesus. I am sure you will want to read the rest of the letter: it offers practical ways to live as a true Christian ought to live, and "DEMANDING WAYS TO LOVE AS A TRUE DISCIPLE WHO HAS DECIDED TO IMITATE JESUS OUGHT TO LOVE.