

FR. FRANCIS MAPLE – PANTASAPH FRIARY, HOLYWELL

23RD Sunday of Ordinary Time

TOTAL COMMITMENT TO GOD

Lk. 14:25-33

Jesus is not One for half measures. He wants disciples who will give him total commitment. There were many who were attracted to Him. How could they not be because of His magnetic personality! So He addressed everyone who wanted to be involved in His cause. “If any man comes to Me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be My disciple.” In other words He was saying to them if you want to be a follower of Mine you have to go the whole hog, no half measures. You can’t make a fool of yourself like the fellow who started to build a tower and couldn’t finish it. Or, like the king who went to war without enough soldiers to win the battle. You may think at this moment that following Me is attractive, and it is, but you must have the determination to see it through to the very end.

I remember when I was very young being told by my teacher that Jesus loved me more than anyone. That shocked me. I had a great love for my Mum and Dad. I could not appreciate how anyone could love me more than them. Obviously I hadn’t yet learned how deeply Jesus loved me and all He had done for me. I entered the Capuchin Order in 1955. God gave me this wonderful grace. I was attracted to the life the friars had to offer me. When I entered I really hadn’t a clue what lay ahead of me. There were times when the going was far from easy. I thank God that in His wisdom I did not know what was in store for me when I made my commitment. He hid the difficult crosses from me. If I had known, I would have had to give even more serious thought to the commitment I made. But God in His generosity has helped me through the valleys of religious and priestly life.

Some people are shocked when they hear Jesus using the word ‘hate’ in our relationship with our parents and loved ones. This was His way of speaking in hyperbole. He was emphasising that He must come first and must be loved even more than our nearest and dearest. Only He can speak and make demands on us like that because He is God. Obviously He does not want us to hate our Mum and Dad. Didn’t His Father give us the Fourth Commandment, “Honour thy father and thy mother”?

Some think that Jesus addressed these tough words only to people who are thinking of entering the priestly or religious life. These words are addressed to everyone for we are all called to follow Christ. They are addressed to workers who neglect their work; to business people who are dishonest and cheat others out of their savings. They are addressed to people who maliciously engage in character assassination. They are addressed to the bully who makes other people's lives a misery. How can all these people claim to be followers of Christ and still engage in these sins?

Jesus wants all His followers to be winners and not quitters. He wants them to have staying power. He Himself was a finisher. In fact His second last words were, "It is finished." He started something and completed it. He wants us to focus our eyes on Heaven and no matter what obstacles come our way we are not going to take our eyes off Him, because we want to live with Him forever in His heavenly Kingdom.

Lord Jesus, we ask You to keep calling men and women to follow You and to give us and them the gift of perseverance and like You to finish the course to the very end.