

The Lord stresses the need for unqualified commitment.

The Lord stresses the need for unqualified commitment; the reality of difficult personal choices. As the Lord commissioned His Apostles, He defined the nature of commitment to Himself: one must love Him first and foremost among all others one cares for (Mt. 10:37). This includes familial loyalty and affection. Love for Christ must come before love between parents and children.

Those engaged in Apostolic labors must be prepared to put Him first ahead of any of these ties. His demand is not meant to create competition between Himself and one's family, but rather to establish a rank order among loyalties. When we "commend ourselves and each other, and all our life" to Him, we are granting Him first place. When all family members are committed Christians, no problem of torn loyalties should emerge. Christ as Lord will stand first for all the Faithful.

However, in actual practice in today's secular society, more and more Christians are confronting real choices between love for parents or children and keeping their commitment to the Lord and His Church. Which shall it be? Will family ties pull us away from the Liturgy, from the moral choices He would have us make, or from the prayer and devotion which sustain our vital relationship with Him? Let us not slough off these issues by saying that such choices are only for the clergy. Every Baptized member of the Church is under this obligation to Christ as Lord.

The tests that measure our Christian commitment come when we face choices with a potential for pain, whether the suffering is physical, emotional, spiritual, mental, or financial. Consider the way the Lord Jesus approached His Passion: the Gospel narratives reveal that He deliberately embraced death. He actively decided to die on the Cross. Of His own free will He accepted the humiliating attacks unleashed upon Him. That same spirit of determination in the face of suffering is the price the faithful Christian accepts when confronting "torn loyalties." Shall we be worthy? Shall we prefer His eternal blessing, His glorious "Axios" upon us, or shall we settle for the passing and fading approval of friends and family?

Listen to Him: "he who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mt. 10:39). Listen well to the Lord. There is also good news. All those who choose to place Christ first in their lives, who take up their cross and follow after Him, have blessings. The blessings the Lord mentions will not be reserved only for the age to come, but the Faithful servant also will know them in this world.

O Lord, may our sacrifice always be acceptable and well pleasing in Thy sight.

