

## THE REQUIREMENT AND THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

It is inherent in us to always think about the requirement and what it will cost us to achieve what we desire or want. The major reason for doing this is to know if we can achieve our desire with the resources we have. In the Gospel reading today (Luke 14:25-33), Jesus asked us, His listeners, if we do not check the cost of constructing a tower before embarking on such a project to make sure we have what it takes to complete the project. He is telling us to make sure we complete the good things we start. Some people began their lives on a good note or were so faithful to the will of God but did not end their lives as they started. At this stage in our lives, especially for our senior citizens or retirees, this is a time to pray, read spiritual books, and prepare for going back to God. This is a time to educate the young ones about what life truly is from your wealth of life experiences. This is the time to complete the good work God sent us to do on earth. According to our ancestor, David, most people live between 70 to 80 years (Psalm 90:10). By the special grace of God, one can live above 80 years. If you are above 70 years, think more about how to be grateful to God. REMEMBER THE WAY WE END OUR LIVES ON EARTH MATTERS A LOT. In the same vein, using the wisdom of how a smart king checks his military capacity before engaging in any battle, Jesus pointed out the need for us to always consider the requirements for becoming successful in any of our endeavors, and if the requirements do not guarantee success, to look for another approach. Every organization or institution at the beginning of every fiscal year always make a budget that shows the requirements for running the affairs of the organization or institution and its costs. Today, we are being encouraged to think about the requirement and the cost of discipleship. The requirement for becoming Christ's disciple lies in following in His footsteps. In the Gospel reading today, as Jesus was traveling with a crowd to Jerusalem where He would be crucified, He turned to the people and made some thought-provoking statements. He told the people that for them to be His disciples they must hate their family members including their own lives and carry their own crosses and come after Him (Luke 14:26-27). This reminds me of a child who told his family members that he would stop sharing his cookies with them because Jesus told him to hate his family members. This child, based on his understanding, was ready to please Jesus by doing whatever He asked us to do. Can we try to please Jesus as this innocent child? PLEASE - JESUS DID NOT WANT US TO HATE ANYBODY. The word which Jesus used is "miseo" an old Greek word meaning to hate or to prefer or favor someone less. It also means to love less. The

Gospel according to Matthew made it more understandable. According to the Gospel, Jesus said, "Whoever loves his father or mother, brother or sister, more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). Jesus wants us to love our family members but to love Him more or to make Him our first and utmost priority. The person we put first in our lives or prioritize most in our lives usually has a great impact on our lives. TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS IS TO LOVE HIM ABOVE EVERY OTHER PERSON OR ANYTHING ELSE. Also, Jesus pointed out that for one to be His disciple the person must carry his or her own cross and come after Him. The Cross was an instrument of suffering and death. In Jesus' era, the Romans forced convicted criminals to carry their own crosses to the place of crucifixion. Carrying a cross means carrying one's own execution device. Our cross includes everything that diminishes either our physical or spiritual life. Now, our crosses can mean our challenges, crises, and sin. Some youths in my country are known for saying this slogan: "Follow who knows the road (route)." JESUS KNOWS THE ROAD TO A HAPPY AND ETERNAL LIFE. In fact, Jesus wants us to ask Him for divine grace and imitate Him on how He carried His own cross with patience and perseverance. Finally, Jesus pointed out that His disciples must renounce their possessions. "Renounce is a call to give up the power possessions can have over us and to recognize that possessions hold no power before God and are not more important than God" (Fr. Jerry). Jesus does not want our material possessions to come between us and God. MAY GOD HELP US IN BEING HIS TRUE DISCIPLES, AMEN.