

## WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A TRUE DISCIPLE

To be a disciple of Jesus means to follow him, to listen to his teachings and live by them. Being a disciple of Jesus is very demanding and requiring total trust, no matter what. The opening sentence of the Gospel in Matthew 10:37-42, sounds quite shocking and seemingly so unexpected of Jesus: ***“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...”*** and ***“whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”***

These words may sound disrespectful and lacking common sense... Are they? What do they mean?

Following Jesus as a disciple means entering into a close relationship with him: the kind that allows one to see the other as ***“friend”*** (John 15:14). If we desire to be “friends” of Jesus we cannot allow anything or anybody to place an obstacle to this relationship; especially if that something or someone expects to occupy first place in our priorities and be the centre of our attention, in place of Jesus!

Jesus’ love for us, his disciples, is life giving and liberating, and embraces everyone. In fact he says ***“...as I have loved you, you also love one another”*** (John 13:34). It follows that he is teaching us to love our family not for selfish reasons or for self-interest, but to love as he loves.

In time, the disciples follow Jesus so intimately close, that they become another Jesus: they think like him, they speak like him, they act like him: they have let go of their old life ***-they appeared to have lost life-*** but they have actually ***“found it”***.

Jesus also says: ***whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me”*** (Mt.10:38). As Jesus carried his cross to Calvary, so the disciples are expected to do the same. ***“But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him”*** St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans 6:8.

Jesus does not ask of his followers anything that he has not gone through himself first: so, as he died to destroy our sin, we too, in Baptism, renounce sin and live a new life in Christ (see Romans 6:10-11). *As they say... NO PAIN, NO GAIN...*

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