

EVERY VOCATION HAS ITS CONSEQUENCES OR CROSS

HOMILY ON THE 4TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (B)

Everything in life has its challenges just as every decision one takes under the sun has its consequence our life vocation or career is not left out. These challenges could be termed suffering or a cross depending on bearer. For Christian it is a cross but for the non-Christian, it is a mere suffering. It will be ad rem here to make a subtle distinction between the two. Suffering and cross are one and the same thing because the pains and difficulties experienced in one are also found in the other. The difference lies only on the understanding of the bearers. If the bearer is a Christian who understands the teaching of Christ about the Holy Cross and its salvific nature, accepts it as such and carries it with courage and fortitude with the aim of doing the will of God, it become a cross and therefore light for him/her. But if on the other hand, the bearer is not a Christian or is a Christian but did not understand the through meaning of it nor its salvific nature, he will be grumbling, blaming everybody, and sometimes God Himself. He goes about asking such questions as 'why me?' 'What have I done?' 'Where did I go wrong?' 'When will this come to an end?' etc. He thinks the world is coming to an end. He loses every courage and confidence in God. Tell him that it could be the will of God and he would retort, 'which God?' Is God a sadist? Why must He take pleasure in seeing me suffer? And the likes.

If this distinction is understood, we can further say that whether or not a cross is accepted or rejected it will certainly come, the difference is that instead of coming as a cross, it may come as a mere suffering thereby producing no desired positive effect on the bearer. While cross is salvific and grace-filled, suffering has little or no merit attached. Every cross is sent for our upliftment and sanctification but when its bearer decides to turn it into suffering, rather than being a source of blessing it brings curse.

Every vocation has its own trouble. If you are married you have a lot of challenges that go with married life which you must necessarily have to contend with, if on the other hand, you are a priest or religious it has its own difficulties and many things to worry about. What matters is the proper understanding of the particular vocation and its attended realities and challenges before embracing it and a proper disposition knowing fully that the world is not a bed of roses.

A story is told of two young girls who were bosom friends from their youth. One later became a nun while the other got married. The married one told her husband ever before they got married, how dear her friend was to her and pleaded with him that they would be visiting her in the convent at least every other Sunday. The husband accepted. They began that practice sometimes they go every Sunday but each time they went they would find the Nun praying in the chapel. Since her husband was very rich, she always prepare delicious meal for her friend. After their visit, while the married friend would be regretting why she married saying, ***'I would have entered the convent and devote my entire life to God; look at my friend every time she is in the chapel communing with God but here I am, swearing in material things, the Nun on the other hand goes back to the chapel as her friend leaves and complain to the Lord, why this heavy cross? It is too much for me to bear. Look at my friend happily married, cruising around with her husband such big car. Everything is at their beck and core but for myself I am only doing nothing but expecting their generous gift every Sunday from their hard earned resources. How many rich suitors came for me and I rejected them only to find myself in this prison?'*** When this continued for a long time, the nun was given a vision. In her vision, she saw herself in a large field and in the field were many crosses difficult to count of different sizes and she was asked to make a choice. She was so happy because she saw a very tiny cross there and said to herself, 'today my sorrows will come to an end and there will no longer be any need to complain to God any more. So she went for the tiny cross but unfortunately she was not able to shift it from its position let alone carrying it. She was downcast saying if I cannot carry this tiny one which one else will I be able to carry since I must necessarily carry one. She continued to try one cross the other until the only cross left was the very massive one she went for it since she had no other alternatives. She picked that massive cross effortlessly and threw it on her shoulder because it was as light as a feather. The Lord told her, 'that cross you just picked is the religious life you are trying to run away from.'

Since every vocation has its challenges and difficulties, all that is required is our disposition and docility to carry out the will of God even if it does not agree with our own will. Pre-knowledge of this will help us to choose correctly, your vocation in life. If you choose wrongly you may find yourself living in perpetual sorrow all through your life. If you are married and would like to make a happy home, you

must be prepared to let go. Sometime you will have to surrender your own will to that of your spouse for peace to reign and for the edification of your children. Some other times you may contend with the cross of barrenness, impecuniosity, lack of other necessities of life like shelter, cloths, bereavement, loss of property, even waywardness on the part your children etc. If you are a priest you must be ready yield your will to that of your or superior and never to carry out your own will especially when your will conflicts with that of the bishop or superior even when the latter is less-intelligent that you are and his bidden makes no sense to you. The will of God must always be found in the will of your bishop or superior, even when you think that your will is exactly what God want, otherwise, you will be inviting frustration, crisis and confusion into your life which will begin on the day you say '*non serviam.*'

Anything that comes to a man is equal to the man. If the going becomes very tough which is often the case, the best option is not to back out since backing out will only make you a coward. The best thing rather will be to call upon the Lord whose voice even the evil spirit recognizes, as we can see in today's reading, to come to your assistance so that you can come out of your difficulty victorious. He can give command and that spirit of weakness making you to lose courage will take to his heels.

Lack of readiness to embrace the cross that go with our vocation or career in life has led to the erroneous or even heretical teaching which tend to feed the greed of our present day prosperity gospel preachers or better put, preachers of cross-less Christianity. Like today's first reading, they are prophets who say what the Lord did not tell them, but erroneously do them in the name of the Lord. They are better addressed as false prophet. In his address to the Galatians, St. Paul warned, "...if anybody preaches any gospel to you different from the one received before, whether an angel of God or ourselves, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-8). In another passage, he warned us to guard against such people who cause division among us by their erroneous teaching, according to him, these people are not worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ but their own stomach (Rom. 16:17 -18).

A lot of these prosperous preachers today make their living through preaching cross-less Christianity because that is what the people like to hear. But we should not forget that the prophet that God promised through Moses today that He would

send is no other than Jesus Christ who paid the prize of our salvation with His blood and teaches to carry our cross daily and follow Him. This road of the cross is the road that all the apostles and disciples followed, it is the road walked by all the saints and martyrs; our Blessed Mother and even Christ Himself followed this very road. It is the only way, there is shortcut. According to St Peter Christ suffered for us leaving us an example that we should follow in His stead (1Pt.2:21). So cross-less Christianity is a contradiction and therefore any teaching that contradicts Christ's is heretical and hence should not be followed.