**Following Jesus: a Fulfilling, Yet a Costly Invitation**

*By Pedro Mendez*

Sunday, the Day of the Lord, is here! The bells are ringing, and the pastor with a deacon and the altar servers—with smiling faces—welcome the parishioners coming to Mass! The Celebration by which Christ gives Himself through his Word and his own Self, starts—hymns are sung by a choir echoing Heaven, the incense fills the atmosphere with its heavenly fragrance, readings are proclaimed, a homily is preached, our own selves are given in sacrifice in the offertory, Jesus’ Body and Blood is given through human hands, and a mission is given to us at the end of Mass! What a beautiful celebration! Can it be something else to consider other than that? After all, we affirm that the “Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life.” *However*, *there is something else to consider: our being followers (disciples) of Jesus Christ in our daily lives.*

Throughout the gospels, Jesus invites us to follow Him in a firm and uncompromising way, as well as reveals eternal fruits and costs to following him. Let us consider this: *our following Jesus has eternal fruits, i.e.* *our encounter with Jesus and His passion, death and resurrection in the midst of our daily life experiences bear fruits that lead us to eternity with God Himself*! *Thus,* *following Jesus has its source and summit in the Eucharist; but develops fruitfully through a daily relationship with Him.*

We encounter Jesus *daily* when we, *intentionally*, make time to pray, read Sacred Scripture, celebrate the Sacraments, and serve the most needed, among others. We embrace the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ when we surrender, *daily*, all our misfortunes of life to the passion and death of Jesus Christ, as well as when we unify our happiness to His resurrection. From here all the virtues and skills we need to relate to God, ourselves, others, and creation emerge fulfilling our existence daily! Therefore, being a follower of Jesus is becoming a *witness* of his love and mercy to all who surround us. In words of Pope Francis, being a follower of Jesus is to be a missionary disciple.

Are not our hearts longing for this fulfilling daily experience? Yes, they are; because our hearts shaped by daily experiences were created to be fulfilled in God alone! There is a cost though: *we need to surrender ourselves totally to Jesus Christ, which includes, according to Luke’s Gospel, hating our relatives, taking our cross, and even to be ready to renounce our possessions if needed*. Is Jesus really asking us to hate our relatives and not to fulfill our family duties? No! Jesus is inviting us to follow Him through an uncompromising and firm loyalty, which Matthew’s Gospel explains as “loving Jesus *more than* our relatives” (10:37). In one word, *Jesus is inviting us to be his followers by placing Him at the center of our lives in a very determined way, to the point that we would love him more than our relatives.* In turn, we would learn, from Jesus Himself, to relate to God, to love our relatives and enemies, to take up our cross, and to place our material goods in its proper place.

Jesus is inviting us to a daily relationship so that the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration may be a Feast to celebrate, instead of, as it happens sometimes, a duty to fulfill. Would you accept his costly, yet fulfilling invitation? I hope so.