

13th Sunday in Ordinary Year A – Mt 10: 37-42-Ferntree Gully Newsletter 2020.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks about priority for God in one's life. Today's consumeristic world has a shift from God-centeredness to self-centeredness. Jesus says, "whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Let us contemplate on our own priorities of life. Is Jesus my first priority? Are my attitude and activities oriented towards Jesus? Whenever one decides to follow Jesus by receiving different sacraments, he /she says "Yes" that Jesus is his/ her priority. But in a long run there is a danger of shift from this priority. One moves from God-centeredness to self-centeredness. He/she creates his/her own priorities. God becomes only his/her sidelined priority. Today Jesus reminds us of our priority. Being a Christian, our priority must be JESUS. If at all we have deviated from the priority let us come back to Jesus.

There is a beautiful Parable of the Life Saving Station by Theodore Wedel. It is about a beautiful Life Saving Station in an Island. Very often ship wreck happens in the nearby sea of this island. Then a few people came together and thought of helping those people who are affected in the ship wreck. A small hut was made for this purpose and they kept constant watch over the sea and they could save many lives in that small hut.

Later many people started to give financial support since their lives were saved. Then some of the inmates of the lifesaving station began to feel the need of a better home with the modern facilities. Then they made huge buildings with modern facilities. Now in the midst of the new comforts they found it difficult to go to the sea and save others. They started to hire other people for the work and they devoted themselves in discussions and amusements. Once there was a great ship wreck, many people were brought. They were very dirty and half dead. Then majority wanted to keep the cleanliness of the club. They wanted to make a bath room for these dirty people and were not taken inside the lifesaving station. When the house lost its primary goal, some people started to protest, but they were expelled. They had to open another hut for saving the lives. But the history was repeated. There are so many lifesaving stations at this island. Ship wrecks are frequent in those waters. But most of the people drown....

Sometimes our story also may be same. The purpose with which the journey was started might have lost in the long run. The priorities might have changed. We are preoccupied with Self-maintenance, Self-preservation and Self-perpetuation. There is a need of renewal.

In the Gospel According to St. Luke 14:15-24, Jesus narrates the parable of Great dinner.

Jesus is sitting for a dinner in the house of a leader of the Pharisees and meanwhile someone is telling him "blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God." Responding to the statement Jesus is presenting a parable of the great dinner.....

Someone arranged a great dinner and invited many. When everything was ready, he told his servant to inform the guests. But the first one said – "I have bought a piece of land and I must go and see it, please accept my regret." The second one said – "I have bought five yokes of oxen, I am going to try them out, please accept my regret." And the third one said – "I am just married, I can't come." All of them had valid reasons not to go for the dinner and they too were very polite in saying please accept my regret.

But what is the reason that the host is getting angry with them and saying “none of those who are invited taste my dinner.” Here the question is of the priority. Everything is good but what must be given priority? Very often we also have same problem. We do a lot of work, but often forget to give priority to be with the Lord. It is in Jesus we have meaning for our life. Let us not forget our priority.

In Russia, the rich people protected their property hiring people to watch over it. One fine evening Rabbi Naftalis was making his evening walk. He saw a watch man making his rounds to take care of someone’s property. The Rabbi asked him, “For whom are you walking, young man? He told him the name of his owner. But he added asked Rabbi “for whom are you walking Rabbi? The word hit the Rabbi like a flying arrow. After a long silence with some effort he replied “at the moment I am not walking for anyone. Then the Rabbi asked him, “Are you willing to be my servant? Of course, but what will I have to do? The Rabbi replied, “You will have to remind me for whom I am supposed to walk.”

As the story goes, we need constant effort to be reminded of our priorities. Let us make constant efforts to reflect, refresh and renew our priorities in our spiritual life. May God Bless you all.