

Column 9-7-25

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We are reminded today of the cost of discipleship. I think it is shocking for us now, and just as surprising to the disciples then, to hear Jesus say, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:26). We think, isn't this contrary to Jesus' teaching on love?

Jesus' message centers on discipleship. Are we, His followers, prepared to follow Him without any hesitation? Jesus isn't telling us to hate our family members, but that we might need to distance ourselves from those we love to follow Him.

Discipleship means putting everything—family, money, our life—second, and prioritizing Jesus first. These attachments can sometimes take precedence, but to stay committed to Jesus, we need to place them second.

I believe this message is very important, especially in light of the news about the school shooting at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis. My heart broke when I heard the news. I thought about our own St. Michael School students who attended Mass the same day.

There are no words of comfort that can ease this pain or make sense of senseless violence. It is easy for us to point fingers and assign blame. We might even turn away from God in these times. Essentially, neglecting to follow Jesus without compromise. But it is precisely in these moments that we need to draw closer to Jesus and follow him more closely.

As disciples, we recognize that hope surrounds us, even when we don't see it. We are still in a Jubilee Year of Hope. I often look to the Jubilee logo now. The anchor, which keeps the ship steady in rough waters, symbolizes Jesus anchoring and stabilizing us through life's storms.

I've mentioned it before: discipleship is tough. It requires commitment, self-sacrifice, discipline, and transformation, but it's worth every bit of effort.

On another note, this weekend marks the celebration of World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. When Pope Francis established it in 2021, it was observed in July to align with the memorial of Saints Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus. However, U.S. Bishops approved moving it to the first weekend after Labor Day to coincide with National Grandparents and Elderly Day. This week, please try to visit a grandparent or an elderly person in your community. Grandparents exemplify holiness. They teach us in the hope that we will carry on the love of Christ.

God Bless,
Fr. Benson