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ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

Reflection by Bishop David Hamid | Second Sunday after Trinity – June 21, 2020

In the name of The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Friends, just a word about today's Gospel.

The first disciples who heard Jesus say, "Come, follow me", did not know what they were getting into! They followed him around Galilee, listening to his teachings. They saw him doing wonderful things: healing the sick, freeing people from demons. I am sure they enjoyed being in the company of a celebrity. But they would soon learn that to follow Jesus means much more. Today's Gospel tells us that to be a disciple is challenging, at times it is even radical.

There is a false Gospel around today. It teaches that to be a Christian means a life of security and well-being. This is called "the prosperity Gospel". It is a distortion of the Christian Gospel, but it is a widespread distortion. *Time* magazine had a poll and discovered that 60 percent of Christians believed that God wants people to be prosperous. And over 30 percent believed that if you give your money to God, God will bless you with more money! The good Christians of Lanzarote I am sure are a bit more sophisticated than those polled by *Time* magazine!

Jesus invites into a life which is not about wealth, fame, comfort, or popularity. To be his follower means being reoriented to a new set of values, the values of his kingdom. And in that kingdom, cross comes before comfort. Jesus warns his disciples about this in today's Gospel.

Business contracts and agreements tend to hide the hard stuff in what we call *the fine print*! But not Jesus. He tells us up front: to follow him will not be easy. It will make demands of us; we will face challenges that we might not have expected.

He says, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword". This is really hard for us to understand. We talk about the Prince of Peace and the kingdom of peace. We are called to be peacemakers. But Jesus is saying that peace is not a matter of keeping quiet, of not rocking the boat, of maintaining the status quo. Peace is more than the absence of conflict. When Jesus talks about the sword, he is telling us that we are going to struggle a bit with the world for there are things that need to be changed. Christians are not just passive, shrinking violets. We are to be active, engaging with the world, to put it in line with God's plan.

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This is what the many *peaceful* voices that are being raised around the world right now are seeking. They are voices raised for racial justice, to question our collusion with certain myths about our history.

What about these words our Lord uses about our family: about a man being set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, about the dangers of loving one's father or mother more than Jesus? Jesus is using this very graphic example to show us that everything, even our most treasured of relationships is to be seen through the lens of Christ's call to be his disciples to reorient our lives. God calls us to seek the kingdom of justice, love, and peace. Remember friends, this is what we pray for each day in the Lord's prayer. This may mean that we end up in conflict, even with those who are dear to us. Perhaps your family or friends may already be puzzled by your Christian commitment. But I am sure you have not been disowned and cast out by them! But... when we follow Jesus, we are likely to be rather counter-cultural. We may have to stand up for things that the world around us might choose to ignore or even reject. What might these counter-cultural things be? Well, valuing *people over money and economics* is one. Reducing our own consumption so that others can have an equal and just share of the planet's resources and so that our planet can sustain us, is another. As disciples we cannot escape Christ's call to be different from the world.

But friends, we are not alone in this. We have our Lord Jesus present in our community, we have our brothers and sisters in Christ, who like us are on the same journey, so we can help and support each other with the challenges. And we have God's powerful Spirit who dwells with us and strengthen us. Today let us hear the word of our Lord in the Gospel ring out: You are of more value than many sparrows.

So, whatever happens in our challenging road of discipleship, God will take care of us.

Amen.