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“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”
(Lk 9:23).

Don’t think that just because you are in the world you can take to it like a fish to water. Don’t think that simply because the world comes into your home through the media you are free to listen to or watch every program.

Don’t think that just because you walk the streets of the world you can freely look at all the ads and billboards and buy just any publication at the newsstand or bookstore.

Don’t think that just because you are in the world you can live as you please, the way everyone else does, following the world’s examples of immorality and passively accepting abortion, divorce, hatred, violence or embezzlement.

You can’t.

You are in the world; no one can deny that. But you are not of the world (see Jn 17:14).

This makes a great difference. It puts you among those who don’t live according to what the world says, but rather according to what the voice of God suggests to you from within. God lives in the heart of every human being. If you listen to him, he will lead you into a kingdom that is not of this world, a society in which true love, justice, purity, meekness and selflessness are lived, where self-control is the norm.

Many young people journeyed to India and the Far East, hoping to find some peace of mind and to discover the secrets of the Eastern spiritual masters who, after a long process of self-mortification, frequently radiate a more genuine kind of love that touches everyone who meets them.

The quest of these young people is a very natural reaction to the uproar in the world, to the noise around us and within us that leaves no room for silence in which to hear God’s voice.

However, it is not necessary to go to India, considering that for two thousand years Christ urged you to deny yourself (see Lk 9:23). Those who are Christians cannot expect to lead a comfortable and easy life. Christ did not, and he will not ask any less of you if you want to follow him.

The world [with all its attractions] comes at you head on like a rushing river, and you must go against the current. It is also like dense underbrush in which a Christian must look very carefully where to step. And where should you step? In the footsteps that Christ himself laid down for you while here on earth. These footsteps are his words.

Today he repeats to you: “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself.” If you follow Christ, you may be laughed at, misunderstood, scorned, slandered or isolated. You must be ready to lose face, to give up the easygoing, socially acceptable way of being a Christian. And there is more:

“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and

take up his cross daily and follow me."

Whether you like it or not, suffering is a part of everyone's life, yours as well. Sufferings great and small come our way every day.

If you try to avoid them, to rebel against them, or if you feel like cursing them, then you cannot be called a follower of Christ.

Christians love the cross; they love suffering even amidst tears, knowing that suffering has a value. God had countless ways at his disposal by which he could have saved humankind. Yet he chose to use suffering.

Remember, however, that Jesus rose after carrying his cross and being crucified. You, too, are destined to rise (see Jn 6:40) if you accept with love the sufferings that come from living an authentic Christian life and those that each day brings, rather than despising them. By doing so you will see that even here on earth, the cross is a way that leads to a joy you have never before experienced. You will begin to grow spiritually, and the kingdom of God will become firmly established in you. Little by little the world's attractions will fade away before your eyes and seem as if they are made of cardboard. And you will no longer envy anyone.

Then you will be able to call yourself a follower of Christ.

"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

And like Christ, whom you have followed, you will be light and love for the countless suffering people in today's world.

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