July 2, 2017
Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

2 Kgs 4:8-11, 14-16a
Rom 6:3-4, 8-11
1 Pt 2:9
Mt 10:37-42

by Don Timmerman

Many Americans are preparing for the 4th of July celebration. Many Americans consider themselves to be patriots, and they will endure a great deal to defend America, to preserve the American way of life. They will give glory to the country that threw bombs in the air at the enemies of our country so they can be “free.” For years we at Casa Maria have refused to honor the nation because it does not believe in what Christ taught us. We cannot say we follow Christ and then support war, weapons, killing and destruction of lives and support systems. We always speak out for Christian living and even go to jail for doing so.

Christians should be careful as to whom they pay allegiance. We heard the words of Christ in the Gospel. “No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me. No one who prefers son or daughter to me is worthy of me.” If we put “country” rather than father or mother in this statement, it illuminates even more. “Those who prefer the country over me are not worthy of me.”

I have seen many churches with American flags in the very front of the church for all to see. It is as if we owe allegiance to the state or country, and that allegiance is considered the same as our allegiance to Christ. You hear people say that we must love God and country. We must sacrifice our lives for the sake of preserving the country. But do we sacrifice as much for the sake of preserving Christianity or the teaching of Christ? Are we willing to carry the cross? Are we willing to live out what Christ taught with His words and deeds? The goals of America and the goals of a Christian are different. The goal of a country is often to make more and more money, to have more and more resources, to build up a huge army to protect what is ours and ours alone. We are willing to sacrifice our sons and daughters in pursuit of this goal.

The goal of a Christian is different. A Christian’s goal is to live simply, to share whatever we have so others may simply live, to refuse to do harm to anyone for any reason and to put our lives on the line in the process of doing this as we illuminate Christ’s love for all. As Christ said in today’s Gospel, “anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.”

For the patriot to lose one’s life for the goals of the country is seen as most important. For the Christian to lose one’s life for the sake of following Christ and His message is most important. It is not Christian to allow millions to die of starvation and the lack of water and other necessities of life when we have, as a nation, the means to save them. Instead of
using tax money to save these people Americans seem to think tax money should be spent on making more and more weapons.

Christ said, “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” Many Americans see as their goal not to welcome others who may be a danger to them or may be a drain on their income. For a Christian we will welcome anyone, even the enemy, and do good to them.

Christ said, “If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not go without his reward.” For the patriot you do what is beneficial to the country. Charity is based on self-interest. For the Christian, you give charity to anyone who needs it, regardless of the consequences. Christians are charitable because they believe whatever you do to others you do also to Christ. A profit motive is not motivation for a Christian.

Once a minister preached that we must never kill another for God or country. We must love all in word and deed. A parishioner later after the service came up to the minister and angrily scolded the minister saying. “You have no respect for our heroes. I’ll have you know that my grandfather fought and died for you and the country.” The minister said, “Well, you have a choice. You may either follow your grandfather or you may follow Christ.”

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