Casa Maria, a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality for homeless women and children, is a house where people live in community and willingly and without pay provide for the homeless and do other works of mercy. They promote and live a nonviolent lifestyle. You would think that others would see this as a good thing since it is the Christian way of acting toward our neighbors. But the volunteers are often put down by others and called names, sometimes even threatened. These community members also try and root out the reasons for homelessness and poverty both here and abroad by having demonstrations and resistance actions against war, waste and weapons. This is when they are really reviled, getting rude gestures and foul names thrown at them. On numerous occasions the government has tried to close down the house. I remember government workers once came with a bulldozer to tear down the garages where we store donated furniture and other household items which are then given to our homeless families and others who come to us for help. The community of volunteers saw this, and they all climbed up onto the top of the garage to prevent them from tearing it down. Sometimes the cars we used to transport our guests to appointments were stolen. The truck we use to pick up donations was once set afire. The cushion in the truck seat was totally burned so only the springs were left. We had to put a blanket on the seat when we did pickups or get pinched in the butt.

Today Christ is calling us to live differently than other people in the world. He is also telling us that if we do this; we will be ridiculed, persecuted and perhaps even killed for living differently than others. Christ said, “Thou hast deceived me, O Lord, and I am deceived: thou hast been stronger than I, and thou hast prevailed. I am become a laughing-stock all the day, all scoff at me.”

Why did the people who were helped by Christ act so meanly toward Him? Why did they eventually kill Him? When Christ told Peter that this would happen to Him he was terribly upset and could not understand how this would happen to such a gentle, kind and generous man like Jesus. But Christ was very stern in His reply...”Get behind me, Satan.” You are acting like others around you and not like me.” Christ told Peter and His other followers how they were to live, but the temptation of society was very great so they had a hard time changing their lifestyle. Society told them to make lots of money, do not be merciful to the poor and disabled (because they are so because of their sins), seek power and fame, seek revenge (an eye for an eye), do harm to your neighbor if s/he does not conform to what you desire.
Christ gave us an example of how we are to live. He lived very simply, showed compassion to those rejected by others, forgave all, including sinners, refused to harm anyone for any reason. He refused to conform to the world, to society. If you love everybody, even your enemies, and do good to those who harm you, you will be despised by society, which teaches just the opposite. You will be called a fool, ridiculed and perhaps, even harmed. Paul tells the Romans, “And be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.”

If we want a new life with Christ we must give up the ways of the world, of society, and start doing what Christ asked of us.

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