

Prefer Father or Mother

“Anyone who prefers Father and Mother to me is not worthy of me”

At first glance a phrase like this seems uncomfortably radical, even fanatical.

However fanatics have no place in Roman Catholicism.

Fanatics act as a result of many motivations, but never from the love of the crucified Christ.

So we must beware of fanaticism in all its many forms.

Perhaps an obvious symptom of fanaticism is a simplistic approach to dilemma.

Without asking what does this mean decisions are made and actions chosen.

So what does the line?

“Anyone who prefers Father and Mother to me is not worthy of me”

Mean.

The first answer is that I do not definitively know

But I can explore

Jesus is the way

The truth

And the life

The way of Jesus is in part the way of love

Middle age is when you worry as much about your parents as you do about your children

So take that situation

If I were to approach a crisis in the care of a parent without a love of God and a loving example of Christ Jesus.

Then I may decide what is good for the parent without respecting the will of the parent.

I may ignore the humility of faith when approaching the weakness

I may not have the courage to share the suffering, but go into denial

The truth of Jesus is uncompromising but takes wisdom to discern

If truth came second to aspiration for my children. Then I might try to love what I want them to be, rather than accept what they are.

If truth were an inconvenient luxury then I might excuse appalling behaviour, rather than face unpleasant conflict.

If truth were lost then I might construct a life of fantasy and well-wishing which will collapse

The life of faith guides and directs if we are prepared to stop, pray, and listen.

Listening means that at times I share the suffering of others

Listening means that commitments will be demanded that involve conflict

The life of faith does not ignore the crucifixion,

in denial,

in perverse justification,

or pure illusion

But takes on the challenge

Even when that means confronting the confused problems

Of parents

Of children

Of life

Nobody is superior to the love of God

Even when the living of that love

Brings us into conflict.

This is not the voice of simplistic answers to complex questions

This is not the voice of the blind adherence to fanaticism

This is faith

That calls for simple meditation

Upon the way you treat people

The truth you are prepared to recognise

And the life you are prepared to accept as a consequence.