The King and the Kingdom
St. Mary's Path
4.03.79

I. Temptation
Matthew 16: 21-28

Every normal human being shudders from self-judging and pain - especially where such suffering is not of one's own making, or where there are ways open to avoid such suffering. Christ more than anybody else on earth was faced with such a choice - to follow a course which He knew His heavenly Father expected Him to take and thereby facing untold humiliation, rejection and suffering unto death. Who would not recoil from such a fate? Who would not be tempted to do everything possible to avoid having to pay such a terrible price? And even if that person was willing to pay the price, how does one react when well-meaning friends do everything in their power to prevent one from following what to them seems such a disastrous course?

What I have described here is what happened to Christ after He had returned to His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem, had to suffer naked at the hands of the rulers, and eventually things to be put to death. The immediate shock of Peter was: "Lord, why must this happen to me?"

Peter's cry, "To give in to His plan! Find another way, a better way!" Which other ways could He have found and followed?
2. The way of non-involvement: Christ could have continued feeding the hungry, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, even restoring the dead to life — in other words, continued to “do good” — and no authority of church or state would have been able to place any obstacle in his way. In fact, his popularity would have continued to grow and his image as man of God would have increased day by day. It was not his ministry of teaching or service which had caused such angry reactions or was seen to constitute a threat to those who wanted to eliminate him — it was his claim to authority and authority itself was his challenge to the false authority of the leaders, his attack on a religious and political system based on non-Christian traditions and many assumptions. These were the reasons why those in authority had to silence or eliminate him! What a terrible, fierce temptation must it have been to him to withdraw from further involvement in those areas of controversy or conflict and to quiet down further pronouncements or actions which could jeopardise his future career, his safety or security!

3) The way of false compromise. Another form of temptation which surely must have occurred to Christ, and which may have been implicit in Peter’s plea — was to come to terms with the arguments by way of concluding some other deal based on a false compromise — a compromise which would have required a violation of important principles. E.g. Christ could have suggested a division of Palestine into two states of influence with Galilee and the northern provinces to be his own territory and Jews, or surrounding them off the opponents. Or he could have suggested: “Both of which would be for and reject the Roman rule — though for different reasons. Let’s then join forces for different reasons.” He is therefore faced with the dilemma of his own unique role and the task of leading the nation and the people in a new direction. He must decide on a path. How can he compromise?

3) The way of open confrontation. Another way of dealing with the situation, and therefore the temptation must have been to him to withdraw from further involvement in these areas of controversy or conflict and to quiet down further pronouncements or actions which could jeopardise his future career, his safety or security!
Surely all such and other tempting ideas had occurred to him before (right from the first of his public ministry - as the temptation in the desert illustrates so clearly) - and would occur again as he set his face to move to Jerusalem! And his answer to all these tempting possibilities of finding other solutions?

Our answer: "Get away from me Satan! You are an obstacle in my way because these thoughts of yours don't come from God but from man! It is the same answer which He gave at the outset to the Devil at the onset of His ministry when the Devil tempted Him by showing Him all the kingdoms of this world and said: "Worship me and all these kingdoms are yours!" i.e.: Accept not only my name, my criteria, but also my methods, my strategies - and you will have full control over all the kingdoms of the world! What does the acceptance of these methods, these strategies signify? It is their very essence! To be one of the many rulers of the world, and self-sacrifice of the Cross is in fact a - failure! And this answer is a clear, definite - NO! A total rejection of the solution offered by Peter - and all those siding with Peter.

Not only that - but immediately after rejecting Peter's stand, Christ proceeds to set out His demands of discipleship: Forget self, carry the cross, follow Him - to lose his life for Christ's sake. We must never forget that Christ is actively busy in assuring his kingdom and in establishing his kingdom here and now. And in rejecting the solution offered by Peter He in fact is telling all those who wish to follow Him:

1. That discipleship of Christ demands active involvement in the struggle for justice. It is not enough to bury oneself with doing good to the hungry, the sick, the maimed - no people also demand an active involvement in exposing injustice, in opposing any system based on falsehood, duplicity and deceit!
2. That discipleship of Christ demands the rejection of any compromise which requires a violation of the basic principles of love, truth and justice!
3. That discipleship of Christ must of necessity create conflict and confrontation which could lead to conflict, but if undertaken by the Christian, it must be in obedience to God's demands for the kingdom and not because of political interests. If it is the latter, it bypasses (circumvents) the cross and does not serve the highest interests of the kingdom of God!
Suffering

1. Suffering through false religious claims:
   "Many shall ..."

2. Suffering through conflict in human society:
   "Wars or massacres..."

3. Suffering through calamities in nature:
   Earthquakes, famines, etc.

4. Suffering through sickness or infirmity:
   Plagues (pestilences) in many places

5. Suffering through economic distress:
   "Famines"

6. Suffering through persecution:
   "Persecute you"

7. Suffering from religious or secular authority:
8. Suffering through your family:

"Your parents, brothers, your relations, and your friends will be.

9. Suffering through association with Christ: "All will hate you for your allegiance to me."

-Someone
18th - Suffering

1) Isa. 59:12-20
   1 Pet. 2: 19-25
   Matt. 16: 13-28

2) Jerem. 2: 1-13
   Mark 14: 55-72

25th - Curs.

Transfiguration

2 Cor 3: 12-18
   Matt 17: 1-8

Isaiah 52: 13-53
   Mark 15: 1-20

1st - Ann.

Isaiah 63: 1-9

2 Cor 2: 8-15

John 12: 20-32

Psalm 53: 7-12

Mark 15: 21-41

Victory of the Cross