

Last Monday, the Gospel for weekday Mass was a continuation (from last Sunday) of our Lord's so-called "farewell discourse," our Lord's words to the Apostles on Holy Thursday evening, right before His Passion. He is preparing the Apostles for what is about to happen to Him, but also for what they will face in the future. In last Monday's Gospel we heard our Lord say: "Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. Keeping the commands of our Lord, then, is a condition for loving Him and there is no way around it. If you don't keep His commands, there is either no love of God (total disregard of His commands, unless they suit me) or at an impairment in love of Him. One cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven in this way.

But there are consequences to keeping our Lord's commands, to following Him, being like Him. If a husband and wife have "too many" kids according to modern standards based on self-interest, they will likely be laughed at. If you don't participate in lewd language, you're not part of the gang. If you oppose the countless forms of sexual immorality today, you're condemned as a bigot and a hater. It happens, at times, even within the human dimension of the Church, even in regard to celebration of the sacraments. Attempts to make Mass Christ-centered, to ensure care of the Eucharist, or even just simple conformity with the instructions of the Church are (not rarely) met with scowls and very vocal objection. Honesty in work or business, the virtue of humility, all of these frequently provoke a response of scorn. In short, one of the consequences of following our Lord's commands is to become deplorable in the eyes of many. Suppose this occurs, suppose you experience it. What then? What are the options? There are really only 2 options: reject being a deplorable or embrace it.

Which one is the will of our Lord? Rejection of being deplorable is certainly the first inclination and would be the one most frequently chosen by people in general, in any situation. Isn't that the will of God? After all is such a rejection not righteous anger? Am I not defending the Lord and His Church? Do I not deserve better? Am I not justified? Nobody likes being treated as a deplorable. So again, is this the way, the will of our Lord?

Well, as I think about this, it reminds me of someone who was very deplorable to the "important people" of the world. So much so that, after much plotting and scheming against him, he was badly beaten and made to stand out in front of a mob as they shouted: Crucify Him, Crucify Him. That man was my Father. That man was, of course, our Lord. Now I have to rethink rejection of deplorability. If I reject being deplorable for the sake of my Father, if I refuse to stand with Him precisely in His deplorability, I reject Him, I reject my sonship. I might say love, love (or Lord, Lord) but it is just lip service. I might say that I am willing to lay down my life for Him, but, well, just not in that way, not by being deplorable; sonship has to be on my terms, Father, not Yours.

Our Lord Himself taught us that deplorability is part of following Him, part of being a son of the Father:

- Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely *on my account*. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
- If the world hated Me, they will hate you as well.
- Whoever does not deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me is not worthy of Me.

Rejection of: being deplorable for the sake of my Father, is rejection of sonship; it is not the will of God.

Ah, the objector might say, but you do not understand. *I* do not understand?? I have been a deplorable throughout my entire priesthood, and from almost every side! But that is not all that important, in fact, not even relevant. What is relevant is not whether or not I understand but what our Lord has revealed. Being deplorable is not easy? Yes, it's true – love (and thus Heaven) is not cheap, easy, or automatic.

Rejection of deplorability for the sake of my Father obviously does not come from God, it comes from the devil. All too often Satan is underestimated: Ah, that's not me, I'm a good person, I'm the one who knows the faith, look at all that I do, look at how devout I am, look at how much better I am than that guy over there, and on and on it goes. We are in fact quite susceptible to these temptations because of the effect of original sin. If anyone thinks that such temptations could never touch him, and/or that he is justified in rejecting deplorability, he is quite ripe for the devil's picking, and (sadly) is likely his property already, regardless of his resume.

There are other consequences of rejecting being a deplorable for the sake of the Lord. For one, it always leads to bitterness, another sign it is from Satan. If you pay attention to the exorcisms in the Gospel, the demons always express this outrage, bitterness, rage, and hatred. Bitterness is always a personal choice. Outside circumstances might foster or trigger it but no one else can force you into it, it is something a person chooses. It can also be chosen against. But choosing against it will entail the willingness to be a deplorable for the sake of our Lord, to truly be His son. This is my Father and I will stand with Him while He is spit on, I too will be spit on, I will not betray, I will not move from His side, come what may – even deplorability. Is this not the example of our Holy Mother, of St Veronica, indeed of all the saints down through the ages?

Rejection of deplorability for the sake of my Father is 1) rejection of sonship with Him, and 2) it leads to bitterness. But another dire consequence is that it eventually cuts the person off from the mercy of God. The person might come to Mass, maybe even say many Rosaries, and even go to Confession. And yet in spite of it all, if I reject being deplorable, I will render myself incapable of receiving the mercy of God. Why? Because it cuts me off from real repentance. Real repentance – a sincere, deep, heartfelt sorrow for my sins – entails acknowledging the fact that I actually am deplorable; maybe not for the reasons that others think but rather because there are countless ways and times that I have failed my Father. As I continue to fight against being deplorable in the eyes of others, it will inevitably lead to a rejection of real repentance. I am deplorable, and I know it. And even more, I thank the Lord for allowing me to see it, be it ever so bitter at the time.

How does one live as a deplorable? Because of original sin, my inclination is to reject it, fight against it, and demand acceptance – which, of course, was not the example of our Lord. So again, how do I “train” myself to accept it, to accept real sonship, to stand with my Lord precisely in His deplorability? Perhaps the most effective, most important, thing is to really meditate on our Lord’s Passion. Meditate does mean to “think” about it but this thinking is more than just “logical” or academic thinking; it entails a certain anamnesis – placing myself there, imagining it as it was, almost as if I am experiencing it or am there right now. If you recall a very happy (or sad) time in your life, it will be as if you’re back there at that time; for married couples, maybe it would be their wedding day. This is how we are meant to meditate on our Lord’s Passion. If we do: 1) our Lord will come to our aid, and 2) it/He will instill in us a desire to stand with Him, precisely in His deplorability, to be a true son of the Father. This meditation allows us to see and even experience the love of a Father, and it provokes within us a desire to respond in kind. Imagine a child going up to our Lord while the mob shouted Crucify Him, and the child takes the hand of our Lord saying: I’ll stay with you papa – or maybe even saying nothing at all. This is sonship, this is the call of our Lord.

Confession is another aid. If I realize I have rejected deplorability for His sake, bring it to Confession. And then also remember that an important part of Confession is the firm purpose of amendment – no Lord, I won’t do it again, I will not betray. An important part of what our Lord said has taught us about the goodness of deplorability is that it is for His sake. While we are on Confession, then, I especially need to examine myself in the face of being deplored by others. It will be too easy to comfort myself by saying that I’m deplorable for the sake of the Lord. It may be that I’m deplorable because I’m prideful, or rude, or obnoxious, or spiteful, or any of many other things. While accepting deplorability for the sake of our Lord, at the same time the deplorable cannot set aside the question of: why am I deplorable – i.e., a careful examination of self. Again – never underestimate the tempter. He is very good at plying his trade, including getting us to deny our sins.

Being a deplorable for the sake of my Father should not rob me of my happiness. Recall Peter and John after they were beaten with rods – they left *rejoicing*. And left for where? They went back to the other disciples. Instead of demanding acceptance, it will be helpful to find other deplorables, those with simplicity and humility, to be around, those who know how to accept being deplorable with happiness. My own brothers and sisters brought this to me (and hopefully me to them) when we were younger. This can be a great help in acceptance of deplorability for the sake of our Lord. It will help me be able to say, in the face of deplorability: ah well, so be it, this life is short, as long as I have the Lord everything is alright. *God bless you. Fr Kuhn*