

JULY 14 2025 FATHER PETER TURRONE

"I have come not to bring peace, but a sword."

One can really understand what Jesus is saying through experience. I remember multiple experiences — one of which was being at a dinner. It wasn't a dinner amongst Catholics, but there was a dinner, and some people were using the name of the Lord in vain. However, the minute myself or someone would use the name of the Lord, but with reverence, all of a sudden, there was this awkward silence.

Think about it. Imagine saying the name of Jesus with reverence in a group setting. You would part the group faster than Moses parted the Red Sea. People have a very different reaction. Why is that?

Jesus told us that people would react. He would come to set a man against his father, the daughter against her mother, and so on. There would be these divisions even in the family. He's saying that his presence, him as God, would touch even the closest unit — the social community of the biological family. Not just the general community, but the family itself. So the deepest bonds that we can have in this life — physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially — even there, his presence would cause division.

Why is that? Because Jesus doesn't want admirers. He wants disciples. This is why he's speaking specifically to the disciples. He's not speaking to those who are far away and in awe of what he's doing but are afraid to follow him. Like even afterwards, when there were certain people looking at the disciples after the resurrection and they saw what they were doing, they were in awe but afraid to come close to them.

Why is that? Again, it's because of who Jesus says he is. It's his identity. He's God, God in the flesh, and therefore he, who is the way, the truth, and the life, reveals the truth. He reveals everything about himself, about

life, and also about ourselves. And he's very demanding. To say that he's not would be a lie. It would be a rejection of the Gospel.

Jesus requires radical love. Radical affiliation. And that's why he is a source of division.

There are many, many Catholic families — good families — who just go along through the motions. They maybe even go to Mass every Sunday, which is great, say grace at home, just live a regular life. But the minute the son or daughter says, "You know, I'm called to religious life," or the son says, "I feel like the Lord's calling me to be a priest," or the daughter says, "I feel like the Lord's calling me to be a religious," we can have the strangest reactions in the family. You would think that the families would be supportive, but oftentimes they're not.

Why is that? Because there is this fear that Jesus is going to take something away. On one level that's true — he wants to take away our sin. But he wants to give us life, and he wants to give us life in abundance.

I go back in my mind to many years ago, during the reign of Benedict XVI. There was this beautiful image in Saint Peter's Basilica at a meeting for Communion and Liberation. It said in Italian, "Jesus doesn't want to take anything away from us. He's not a threat to our freedom, but he wants our freedom to be used for good." That's why we have freedom.

He wants to give us life in abundance. But he knows that it requires sacrifice. How did salvation come into the world? There's no such thing as cheap grace. He died on the cross for our salvation. This is why all of this is tied to the cross as well.

He says, to follow me, to be my disciple, you have to put everything else aside. He's not saying to not love our families — obviously we are called

to love them. It's a sin to not love our families, to not honour our mother and father. Absolutely. He says it himself in the Scriptures, in the Ten Commandments.

But what he is saying is that the ordering of our love must be first centred on him. Why is that? Because he is God, and therefore I owe my life to him. He loved me first, he loved you first, he's the one who offers us eternal life. Therefore, when I love God above everything else, then I can love people in freedom. I can love my parents in the right way. I can love my friends in the right way. Children, spouses, nieces, nephews — I can love the different people around me in the right way, with this freedom, this desire for willing their good. But I have to have the Lord at the centre.

So, he is demanding; there's no way around it. He says that in order to save one's life, we must lose it. I must be willing to put my life in the hands of God and allow him to take me wherever he wants to. And not to worry to protect my physical life if it's at the loss of my spiritual life and eternity.

There was this recent tragedy in the month of June, where yet again, another church in Syria was bombed during Mass, and many people died as a consequence. I was speechless to see the news a day after, where the church was full again with people there praying, saying that we will not be deterred by anyone. Christ is our life, and we give our life to him. How many of us — can I say the same thing?

But all of this, these challenges that he offers us, are always balanced with the beauty of reward. Of his kindness. Of everything that he wants to give us. He says even a glass of cold water that we give to a disciple, someone who's working for the Lord, will not be forgotten. So he's saying every little gesture of love, every gesture that is directly to the Lord and passes through his disciples, will not be forgotten. Everything will be rewarded.

So, there's the demands of discipleship, with real costs that come with that — learning to die to oneself, which is not easy, but it's very rewarding. Why? Because then we have this interior freedom, this joy, and this trust in the Lord, that he'll lead us where he wants, provide us what we need in order to be faithful.

Every little gesture, every little thing that we do out of love for him, will not be forgotten. It will be rewarded. This is why to be a true disciple is the greatest possible thing.

So, I encourage you, my brothers and sisters, we pray for each other. In the Eucharist, we ask the Lord to give us the grace and the strength and the peace to always recognize the privilege we have to be Christian disciples. That we'll never lose that zeal that was given to us, all the gifts and the fruits of baptism, but that they'll continue to increase and abound for our good and for those around us as well.