

## **23 Sun C... Holy**

### **Introduction...**

In today's Gospel we hear those rather stark words of Jesus,

*Unless you hate your father and your mother...*

What is that all about? I want to try to unpack today's Gospel a bit and ask what it demands of us who are disciples of Jesus.

**Refrain: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

### **I Other Christs**

Probably a better translation of the Gospel would be something like...

*... If you love your mother and father more than me, you cannot be my disciple.*

Then Jesus goes on to us that if we follow in his footsteps, we better know what we are getting ourselves into.

To be a follower of Jesus means more than just being a middle income American who works hard, and tries not to hurt anybody... that's ok, but to be a disciple of Jesus means so much more.

We are called to be other Christs in our world...

St. Theresa of Avila has this beautiful prayer that describes what that means...

Christ has no Body now but yours  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours  
Yours are the eyes through which  
He looks compassion on this world  
Yours are the feet with which

He walks to do good  
Yours are the hands with which  
He blesses all the world.

That's what following Jesus is about... being other Christs in our world, in our neighborhood, in our school, at our job. We need to spread the light of God's love and compassion and forgiveness into our world – a world at times under the shadow of darkness and fear and hatred and sin.

**Refrain: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

## **II God's Light**

There's a beautiful story that helps describe what it means for us to continue Jesus' work in our world.

*The old cathedral was a site to behold with its ancient art, ornate woodwork, and stained glass masterpieces. The tour guide offered spiritual and cultural insights that satisfied most of the tourists.*

*But one little girl was curious about the people depicted in the windows.*

*"Who are those people?" the girl asked and pointed to a large and colorful stained glass window.*

*"Saints," the tour guide answered.*

*"Oh!" The sun was bright, the window large, and the girl was tiny in comparison. The sight overwhelmed her.*

*The tour guide began to move, but the girl was still awestruck and curious.*

*"Hey, wait," she called out. "What do saints do?"*

*The tour guide didn't want to spend time on a lesson about the saints. So he just said, "Saints do good things for God."*

*That evening before bedtime prayers, the little girl had an announcement for her mother. "I know what saints do, Mommy. I know the good thing they do for God."*

*"Really. What is it?" Her mother asked.*

*"Saints let the light shine right through them."*

I believe that there is a very important spiritual principle involved here, an important truth about the life of a disciple of Jesus.

We have received the light of Christ in our lives and into our hearts... At our Baptism our parents and godparents were handed a lighted candle with this prayer:

*Parents and godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. This child of yours has been enlightened by Christ. He or she is to walk always as a child of the light. May he or she keep the flame of faith alive in his or her heart. When the Lord comes, may he or she go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.*

All of us are called to keep the light of Christ alive in our world.

At times there seems to be so much darkness, so many bad things.

Do we curse the darkness... do we become cynical or resentful or angry?

Is our life just about seeking to be an entertained consumer... one of the herd?

We are disciples of Jesus... What a challenge.

We are meant to let the light of Christ shine thru our lives...

What a vocation for each of us. What a challenge for each of us.

I remember a funeral I celebrated a number of years ago. Before the Mass there was a group of young women standing in the back of the Church. I headed back and asked them if they were related to the deceased. They said that they worked in an office with the deceased who was their office manager. They described her as a wonderful woman, always kind and

respectful, always willing to help. They recounted that if someone was going thru a rough time in their life the deceased would tell them that she would pray for them. There was something 'good' about her.

She let the light of Christ shine thru her life.

I remember another funeral I celebrated for a wonderful man. The Church was packed with men – not all of them Catholic, not all of them attended Church – but they came to say goodbye to the deceased who always reached out to help others, to give a hand, to encourage and affirm. He wasn't perfect, but he let his light shine in the lives of others.

What will they say about us when we pass?

**Refrain: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

### **Conclusion**

We are called to bring the light of Christ into our family, our neighborhood, our job – our world.

Does that make sense to you?

I fear that many people don't realize this...

They try to be good people, they try to do the right thing – but they don't see their lives as part of the mission and work of Jesus.

This is a challenge and a wonderful calling.

All of us are called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

That's why we come to this Mass.

That's why we pray every day.

Coming to Mass is only the tip of the ice berg...

Our daily prayer and closeness to the Lord need to be a part of our life's journey.

We can only do this with Jesus' help.

As we continue with the Mass let us offer ourselves to our loving Father at this Offertory.

Then we remember Jesus' love promised to us at the last Supper and poured out for us on Calvary.

Finally, we invite Jesus into our hearts at communion.

Jesus wants to come into our hearts, to love us and strengthen us.

Jesus, help us to bring your light into our world. Amen.