Wednesday of the 31st Week in Ordinary Time – Memorial of St. Charles Borromeo
Monastery of Our Lady of La Vang - Thornton, California, November 4, 2026

Readings: Philippians 2:12-18; Luke 14:25-33

"...so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. But, even if I am poured out as a libation upon the sacrificial service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with all of you." (Phil 2:16-17)

These words that Saint Paul wrote to the Philippians, Saint Charles certainly made his own. For him, too, the joy of his pastoral labor lay in the gratitude he felt upon seeing that among his people, in his communities, and among the faithful entrusted to him, the sacrifice and offering of faith were growing—that is, that they were sacrificing and offering their lives with faith and trust to Christ in order to find fulfilment and to enjoy the fullness of their humanity and holiness.

That is why St. Paul, like St. Charles, did not fear giving of himself without measure to nourish, through the sacrifice of his own life, the sacrifice of the sheep of his flock. There is no greater joy for a shepherd, for a father, than to see that the offering of his own life is accepted by the Lord to nourish the offering of the lives of the sheep, of his own children. By following Christ, every father, every mother, finds his or her joy not in the success of their children, but in seeing that their self-giving for their children becomes a gift of themselves to Christ, with Christ, and in Christ. For the faith of which Saint Paul speaks—the faith that Saint Paul proclaimed and spread tirelessly, just as Saint Charles did—is that relationship of trust in Christ and adherence to Him which bestows upon human life the fullness of His love, the fullness of charity, and the free gift of self even unto death.

It is this fullness of life that Jesus proclaims in the Gospel we have just heard: "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." (Lc 14:27)
Following Christ by carrying our cross is not a diminishment or a reduction of life, but rather its fullness, because God gives us life so that we may give it away just as He gives it to us.

To live this way, Jesus does not ask for difficult conditions; He does not ask for any particular qualities: He asks for our willingness to renounce ourselves, to lose ourselves so that we may find ourselves again in the gift of Christ and in Christ to the Father for the salvation of the world.

"Everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple" (Lc 14:33). Renunciation does not mean diminishing or losing, but being free to give our lives, to sacrifice them for the fullness of our being that only Jesus can give us—that only Jesus is for us.
However, assessing whether we are willing to renounce everything for Him is not a calculation we must make based on our own strength or our capacity for renunciation. It is impossible for us to give up everything. But Jesus asks us to make this "calculation" by looking Him in the face, just as when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me?". Jesus asks us to examine our love for Him—whether we are willing to let ourselves be drawn by that love more than by who we are and what we have. So He performs renunciation within us, by giving us His Spirit, His love. We can renounce everything—ourselves and everything else—because He takes us; He takes our whole heart and our whole life. And drawn by His gaze, we understand that it is possible, that it is a grace—the freedom we discover within ourselves to say "Yes" to Him, allowing Him to unite our whole life to Himself.

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