



Jesus said to his Apostles: "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Amen, I say to you, you will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, you are the one constant in my life. You are my beginning and my end. I love you as my savior. I trust you as my closest companion. I hope in you as the one who will welcome me into eternal joy.

Petition: Grant me, Lord, a deeper union with you as the only one who will never fail me.

1. Trust, But Not Too Much: A key paradox of Jesus was that he loved us so much that he underwent the horrors of crucifixion to redeem us and give us a chance at salvation. Yet, he also knows our weaknesses. He knows how fickle the human heart can be. "Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well" (John 2:24-25). Likewise, Christ warns us not to put too much faith in other people. Like us, everyone else has weaknesses. Our faith in them should be relative and realistic. It shouldn't be on the same level as our faith in Christ. Do I put "too much" faith in others? Do I realize that

expecting too much from them leaves me open to needless anguish?

2. Betrayal for Siblings: Christ is the rock against which the waves of humanity crash. His demands cut to the heart of each of us and require a personal response. How each person responds is a mystery. Some will say yes, some will say no. The division within each person can echo in divisions within families. Little wonder that kin can be our fiercest foes. Christ's own show of steadfastness assures us that he remains more loyal than even family members. Can I accept that following Christ can cause friction with my loved ones? Can I offer up my trials for their salvation?

3. Love Without Sacrifice: Christ never promised his followers an easy life. If he had, there would be no shortage of disciples. He knows what really makes us mature in love: sacrifice. Sacrifice purifies us, ennobles us. Love without sacrifice is a fairy tale. To love means to share in another's pain. "When men and women demand to be autonomous and totally self-sufficient," said Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI in a speech February 9, 2008, "they run the risk of being closed in a self-reliance that ... reduces them to an oppressive solitude." Similarly, if we close ourselves to God's pleasure, we stay stuck in our littleness. Can I accept suffering for Christ as a way to break out of the cocoon of my comfort?

Conversation with Christ: Jesus, it's not easy being your follower. Opposition can arise on all sides, even from within the family. Help me bear all this well, for love of you. Grant me the serenity to persevere in the faith. I offer my sacrifices for the salvation of those who oppose my following you.

Resolution: I will pray or make a sacrifice for a family member who is away from the faith.