

Joseph Fadelle was the heir to a small family fortune and designated to become the leader and patriarch of his family. He was given the name Mohammed at birth, and was raised in an all-Muslim area of Iraq.

To call someone a “Christian” was a disparaging insult. He never met a single Christian until he was drafted into the army in the late 1980s. His first impression was that this man, his roommate, didn’t smell and seemed ... on first glance ... to look like any other human being.

Over the course of time, Mohammed became interested in helping his roommate discover the “true” religion, and sought to disprove it by reading the Bible. And then one night he had a dream. In the dream he found himself,

on the bank of a stream ... [and on] the other bank was a [man to whom he] felt irresistibly drawn [to] ... the man on the other side stretched out his hand to [him, and] ... in a reassuring and inviting tone of voice [said]: “To cross the stream, you must eat the bread of life.”

In the course of time, Mohammed was baptized Joseph. It took years for him to even find a priest or a bishop who would baptize him ... because that was illegal ... and carried with it a death sentence. Joseph was imprisoned, beaten, threatened, shot, and deprived of his family title and fortune.

In 2012, he wrote the book, *The Price to Pay: A Muslim Risks All to Follow Christ*. It’s less than 250 pages, and is a compelling read.

In today’s Gospel, we hear one of Jesus’ “hard sayings.” He tells His disciples, and us as well:

If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

*In the same way,
anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions
cannot be my disciple.*

None of us are princes in a middle-eastern royal family. None of us are heirs to fortunes, or tribal leadership. There is always the danger that because our Faith can come to us so easily, that we might forget Jesus' "hard sayings."

Renounce doesn't mean sell it all and live in a cardboard box. The word here in Greek is *apotasso* which means to separate oneself from or withdraw from. There is always the danger that the things we own end up owning us. How immersed are we in worldly things ... which begs the question: how much or how little are we immersed in the things of God?

All over the world, Christians suffer persecution. North Korea, China, Viet Nam come to mind immediately. But also, Algeria and Iraq; and lately Egypt, and now Syria.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has called us to pray for peace. And I, too encourage you to pray for peace.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ; let us pray for peace in our world. But let us also pray that we might re-commit ourselves entirely to Christ and let nothing ... nothing ... separate us from Jesus ... and the grace, and love, and mercy ... and our eternal inheritance from God.