

**“Take up your cross daily and follow Jesus Christ”**

Reading 1: Jer 20:7-9

Responsorial Psalm: Ps: 62:2-6, 8-9

Reading 2: Rm 2:1-2

Gospel : Mt: 16:21-27

**Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:21-27**

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men." Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done

**Meditation:** What is the way to glory and victory in the kingdom of God? Jesus told his disciples that he must first suffer rejection, be crucified, and then rise again on the third day. In so many words he explained that there could be no victory and no glory without the cross. Jesus' prediction of his suffering and death on the cross caused his disciples great dismay and disbelief. Peter, who was often the first to react to whatever Jesus had to say, wanted to protect Jesus from any threat or harm. That is why he rebuked the very thought of Jesus having to face rejection, condemnation, and crucifixion.

**"My way or God's way"**

Why did Jesus use the word "Satan" when he addressed Peter? When Jesus went out into the wilderness to prepare for his public ministry, Satan came to tempt him to follow a different path than the one chosen by the Father in heaven. Now Jesus recognizes in Peter's response another temptation to seek a different and less costly path for accomplishing his mission than the way of the cross. The word "Satan" literally means "adversary" - one who stands in opposition. Jesus reminds Peter that his role is not to be an *adversary* but a *disciple* - one who gets *behind his Master* to follow with trust and obedience.

**Victory and glory through the cross**

Jesus knew that the cross was the only way he could ransom us from slavery to sin with the price of his blood which was shed for our freedom. Through his sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus defeated Satan who held us in bondage to sin and condemnation. And Jesus defeated the power of death and overcame the grave through his resurrection. Through his obedience to his heavenly Father's will, Jesus reversed the curse of Adam's disobedience. His death on the cross won pardon for the guilty, freedom for the oppressed, healing for the afflicted, and new life for those condemned to death. His death makes possible our freedom to live as the adopted sons and daughters of the merciful Father in heaven.

**The paradox of God's economy**

Jesus told his disciples that they, too, must be willing to lay down their lives in order to gain new everlasting life with the Father in his kingdom. There's a certain paradox in God's economy.

**The great exchange**

What will you give to God in exchange for freedom and eternal life? Are you ready to part with anything that might keep you from following the Lord Jesus and his perfect plan for your life? Jesus poses these questions to challenge our assumptions about what is most profitable and worthwhile in life. In every decision of life we are making ourselves a certain kind of person. It is possible that some can gain all the things they have set their heart on, only to wake up suddenly and discover that they missed the most important thing of all. Of what value are material things if they don't help you gain what truly lasts for eternity. Neither money nor possessions can buy heaven, mend a broken heart, or cheer a lonely person.

**Losing all to gain all with Jesus Christ**

A true disciple gladly gives up all that he or she has in exchange for an unending life of joy and happiness with God. God gives without measure. The joy he offers no sadness or loss can diminish. The cross of Jesus Christ leads to victory and freedom from sin and death. What is the cross which Jesus Christ commands me to take up each day? When *my* will crosses with *his* will, then his will must be done. Are you ready to lose all for Jesus Christ in order to gain all with Jesus Christ?

We lose what we gain, and we gain what we lose. When we try to run our life our own way, we end up losing it to futility. Only God can free us from our ignorant and sinful ways. When we surrender our lives to God, he gives us new life in his Spirit and the pledge of eternal life. God wants us to be spiritually fit and ready to do his will at all times. When the human body is very weak or ill, we make every effort to nurse it back to health. How much more effort and attention should we give to the spiritual health of our hearts and minds!

**Questions for Community Faith Sharing:**

1. What do you think was in Peter's mind when he rebuke Jesus ?
2. Have you been tempted by adversary in your life and how would you overcome the temptation?
2. Was there a time in your life when you have been challenged by your faith in Jesus to "take up your cross and follow Him"?

"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all that I have and possess. You have given them to me; to you, O Lord, I restore them; all things are yours, dispose of them according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this is enough for me." (Prayer of Ignatius of Loyola, 1491-1556)