

## 091309 24th Sunday Look To The Cross

As infants we cry... and we get fed. As toddlers who fear the dark... we cry and our parents come to us and cuddle us... and so it goes... From the earliest days of childhood, the way of the world forms us in the attitude that our own needs are more important than anyone else's needs. And as a priest, Fr. Joe Pellegrino says, this demand and reinforcement approach to the world is okay as long as we are children... especially infants or toddlers. But this self-centeredness has to end or we will become an ego-centric adult with no room for God or the people of God in our lives.

The words of the Responsorial... and today's readings tie in so well to an important message for all of us. In just a few verses of today's reading, Peter goes from being the hero to being rebuked. Jesus asks his followers 'Who do you say that I am?' And Peter... dear Peter whom I should probably have as my patron because Peter was at times brash, arrogant, strident, conceited.. Peter says "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." (Ding, ding,ding, ding!) Peter gets the gold star... and Jesus congratulates him... Peter, you've done well. You don't know this on your own, it was my Father who shared this insight.

And then... just a few verses later... Christ rebukes Peter. After hearing Jesus talk about the punishment and death he's going to experience, the brash Peter pulls Jesus aside and says, "Oh no Lord... you're not going to your death... not on my watch you're not." And this beloved Peter.. the first shepherd -- the coming first pope of the Church -- Jesus rebukes him in a strong way:

You are speaking like the devil... get out of my sight... that's what get behind me means.

The strongest part of the message from this Gospel is to recognize and understand Christ's mission. The way to understand Christ's mission... the way to be a follower of Christ isn't to be one of the gang outside of the walls of this Church. The way to understand Christ's mission is to look up there at the cross...

As Fr. Pellegrino says, "The way of the world would demand that Jesus limit his sacrifice." The world tells each one of us to value present times.. to have joy in this moment rather than worry about or do anything oriented towards eternal happiness. It's like the baby I mentioned at the start of this -- I want to be happy now and if I'm not happy -- then no one is going to be happy cause I'll make everyone miserable. That is what self centered infants or adults who fail to mature in the ways of Christ tend to do. It is this way of the world that you and I have to fight against throughout our lives.

Now let's do some real world practical examples and see if they don't lead us to a better understanding of what it means to follow Christ...

A 2 year old child wakes up with fever and vomiting and she hasn't been able to sleep most all of the night. Which likely means that mom hasn't been able to sleep. Does she get up angry and slamming things and waking others because mom can't sleep? Or does she quietly rise again from her lack of sleep and hasten to aid and comfort and reduce the fever of sickness. This is what it means to follow God's plan...

Another example: a husband gets a call from his wife. She's sick. Can he come home right now? Will he fix supper for the kids? (Ok -- admittedly, some wives would have to show him where the kitchen is :) ) Is his answer

that he wants to go to the gym because he needs a workout to reduce his stress? The Christ-centered answer is, "Of course dear, I'll be right home... can I stop at Walgreen's and get you any medicine?" That response is an example of Christ-like sacrificial love.

The ways of selfishness and impatience are the ways of society today... the ways of Christ are of patience and love and tolerance even at the expense of your comfort level.

Now I know we don't think as God thinks. And just as with St. Peter, maybe this is just part of our fallen human nature. BUT.. BUT... we are called to a higher standard. We are called upon and given grace to be more Christ-like. We need to be in the state to receive God's grace... and then we need to consider and work on these challenges... Often, we're called to pick up our cross -- sometimes someone else's cross.

What does it mean that Christians need to carry their cross? How do we do that if we do not fully understand? It means that sometimes doing the will of God is hard, and involves suffering. It means that sometimes following the example and teaching of Jesus is a real challenge. It means that doing the right thing and loving our neighbor can be downright dangerous. It means that sometimes loving demands sacrifice.

And so many of us here are already carrying crosses. You don't have to go looking for them. They find us.

Look at our society and tell me if we have people who know what it means to carry their cross... how many work... really struggle to lose weight so they can give rest to their hearts and try to live longer... How many blame the pastor or the council or the CCD teacher for the failings they see in the Church -- rather than getting involved themselves and working hard to

improve things? How many attack the people and results of an election rather than working like crazy to change the outcome of the elections?

The way of selfishness is often our first reaction to being asked to step away from ourselves and into caring for others. Most of us initially tend to react like the son who told his father that he would not go work in the field, but then realized that he was wrong and went and did as his father asked. Over and over, we witness people by their silence or glazed eyes -- we see teens through adults, say, "No, I am not going to do that. I am secure in my own little world." Or -- "I tried to do something about that before and I was turned down."

Now imagine this sort of reaction if it happened with Peter... beloved and holy St. Peter who, after being publicly rebuked by the Son of God... Peter said, "I've had it with this Church -- I'm outta here..." We might not have a Church for you to sit in and worship today... think about that.

This probably sounds self-serving... I'll tell you what -- I've given my life to the Church... and if you want to know what carrying a cross is -- you try working for the Church which is called to be the Body of Christ. But the answer isn't to leave the Church. The answer is to do what you can -- with as much self-sacrificial love as possible to try to make things better.. .

The message for each of us today: Pick up your Cross... quit complaining. Together, let us say, "Thank you Jesus.. I don't understand why this cross is in my life... but it feels like it fits my shoulder just perfectly!"

## Reading 1

[Is 50:5-9a](#)

The Lord GOD opens my ear that I may hear;  
and I have not rebelled,  
have not turned back.

I gave my back to those who beat me,  
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;  
my face I did not shield  
from buffets and spitting.

The Lord GOD is my help,  
therefore I am not disgraced;  
I have set my face like flint,  
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

He is near who upholds my right;  
if anyone wishes to oppose me,  
let us appear together.

Who disputes my right?

Let that man confront me.

See, the Lord GOD is my help;  
who will prove me wrong?

## Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9](#)

**R. (9) I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

I love the LORD because he has heard  
my voice in supplication,  
Because he has inclined his ear to me  
the day I called.

**R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

The cords of death encompassed me;  
the snares of the netherworld seized upon me;  
I fell into distress and sorrow,

And I called upon the name of the LORD,  
"O LORD, save my life!"

**R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

Gracious is the LORD and just;  
yes, our God is merciful.

The LORD keeps the little ones;

I was brought low, and he saved me.

**R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

or:

**Alleluia.**

For he has freed my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I shall walk before the Lord  
in the land of the living.

**R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

or: **Alleluia.**

## **Reading II**

[Jas 2:14-18](#)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,  
if someone says he has faith but does not have works?  
Can that faith save him?

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear  
and has no food for the day,  
and one of you says to them,

"Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well, "

but you do not give them the necessities of the body,  
what good is it?

So also faith of itself,  
if it does not have works, is dead.

Indeed someone might say,  
"You have faith and I have works."

Demonstrate your faith to me without works,  
and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

## **Gospel**

[Mk 8:27-35](#)

Jesus and his disciples set out

for the villages of Caesarea Philippi.  
Along the way he asked his disciples,  
“Who do people say that I am?”  
They said in reply,  
“John the Baptist, others Elijah,  
still others one of the prophets.”  
And he asked them,  
“But who do you say that I am?”  
Peter said to him in reply,  
“You are the Christ.”  
Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.  
He began to teach them  
that the Son of Man must suffer greatly  
and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,  
and be killed, and rise after three days.  
He spoke this openly.  
Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.  
At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples,  
rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan.  
You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”  
He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them,  
“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,  
take up his cross, and follow me.  
For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for my sake  
and that of the gospel will save it.

**091309 24th Week in Ordinary Time**

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