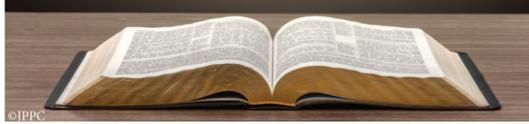


Message of the Week



Dear Parishioners,

Parents do not wish bad things to happen to their children. Good business-people do not want the economy to go sour. Healthy people do not want illness. We don't want it to snow in April or May when the flowers begin to bloom. We don't want it to rain on our picnic or outdoor celebration. We don't want the person involved in an automobile accident to die. We humans have a natural instinct for avoiding what we perceive as bad for us. We want the good things in life. We want life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And yet we hear this weekend a Gospel in which Jesus is seemingly telling us to act contrary to our human instincts. He is talking about the most precious thing we have – life itself – and is telling us to lose it. He is telling us to deny ourselves. He is telling us to *“take up His cross.”* No wonder Peter rebukes Jesus! Jesus *“began to show His disciples”* what faithful discipleship demands ... denying self, losing self, letting self die. Jesus teaches His disciples to let go of self so that a new self can be given. The old self must give way so that a new self can emerge. What we relinquish is ourselves as we are now. What we are given is a new self born from identifying completely with Jesus. It takes a lifetime of discipleship to turn from wanting to rebuke Jesus' way of living through the cross to embracing it. It takes a lifetime of discipleship to let Jesus transform our life into His Life.

Regardless of Peter's good intentions to protect his Master and Lord, Jesus turns Peter's objection to suffering and death into the profound meaning of virtually everything Jesus is about. He does it with a number of concise sayings. Jesus' followers must deny themselves and take up His Cross ... the followers must let go of their life (self-will, human responses, human way of thinking) in order to find Life ... unless one dies, one cannot rise. Jesus forthrightly reveals to His disciples what awaits – death, but also resurrection. If we want to go where Jesus ultimately went – to glory – there is only one road ... to Jerusalem where death awaits. The human response is to recoil (Peter). The divine call is to take up the cross. Jesus doesn't expect of us anything He Himself has not endured. Jesus shares with us the glory He Himself is given. When you think about it, that's really good news!

With respect to the Paschal Mystery, Jesus says it all: *“whoever loses his [or her] life for My sake will find it.”* Lose life (self-sacrifice) and find Life ... cross and glory. This is the Paschal Mystery in a nutshell.

Sometimes our response to living the Paschal Mystery is enthusiastic because things are going well and we don't realize the demands involved (for example Jeremiah in this weekend's First Reading). Then, when the going gets rough, we bog down (for example Peter in this weekend's Gospel). The challenge is to let go and let God so that God can lead us. We need to surrender ourselves. We need to tell ourselves time and time again that we must let go of the old self and life so that God can call us to growth, new Life, and new possibilities for sharing His glory.

When we have truly committed ourselves to the dying and rising that living the Gospel call entails, we may grow weary of the demands but we can't *“not mention”* God or *“speak ... no more”* (First Reading) what has taken hold in us. The Paschal Mystery isn't just a concept. The Paschal Mystery demands turning our heart towards God's love working in us, and this is not without its cost to us. Even sharing in Jesus' divine glory means that we must share in His suffering and death. This is ultimately the challenge of living the Paschal Mystery ... to suffer and die willingly because that is the way to eternal glory. If we only think of the denying and dying and losing, we will recoil as does Peter. If we look through the cross to the glory that awaits us, we will embrace Life with open arms – no matter what comes our way.

May Saint Michael the Archangel defend, guide, protect, and intercede for us always! May you and your families be well and safe! Have a great week!

~ Fr. Larry