



If you wish to come after me you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.

Mark 8:34

SUFFERING, HOPE, AND LOVE

Our readings from Isaiah and from the Gospel of Mark confront us with the fact that the invitation to faith leads us into suffering. In Isaiah, the prophet accepts pain and shaming from others, as he trusts in God. In Mark, Jesus is blunt about this: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” When we embrace faith, we are confronted with our own fears about suffering and about losing comfort, status, and control over our lives. Life has plenty of suffering already, so why choose to add to it? Jesus points to a response: avoiding our fears and clinging to illusion and superficial comforts will not give us what we really want from life. Jesus offers a better, deeper life, a life grounded in God’s love. It is lived in hope of resurrection and the final triumph of this love.

A DIFFERENT LIFE

The Gospel of Mark reaches a turning point in today’s passage. About halfway through Mark, Jesus’ disciples begin to understand Jesus as the Messiah (or Christ). And Jesus begins to spell out just what is expected of those who follow him. The story then shifts to learning just what being Christ, and following Christ, actually means. Jesus shatters the expectation of a political or military power defeating Israel’s oppressors, and reveals a different kind of Messiah. The disciples later come to see that this different Messiah offers a different understanding of power, and of life itself.

We inhabit a world that honors power over others, through wealth or achievement or violence. Jesus invites us into a community and a way of life that honors the power of love and service to others. Lived fully, it is truly a different way of life. It is marked by great suffering and great joy, because it embraces the fundamental pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

A “LARGE” FAITH

The letter of James is designed to enlarge your faith. James knew that his community faced trials that could lead them to abandon the faith, or perhaps to reduce faith to a comfortable, manageable size. In today’s passage, James calls the reader to resist reducing faith to safe, intellectual assent to teachings, and instead to expand one’s faith to actively engage in good works, especially in service to the poor.

To have a “large” faith is to move from apathy toward others’ sufferings to empathy and to action. A large faith leads to a large heart, where we can take in the enormity of suffering in the world around us, not become overwhelmed by it, and do what we can to relieve it. With a large heart, we can even squarely face our own sufferings, accepting our own tragedies with forgiveness and hope, and walking in empathy with all who share in suffering.

TODAY’S READINGS

Isaiah 50:4c–9a
Psalm 116:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 8–9
James 2:14–18
Mark 8:27–35

Twenty-fourth
Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 12, 2021

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Twenty-fourth Sunday
in Ordinary Time
September 12, 2021

The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced.

— Isaiah 50:7

From the Pastor's Desk: Let us walk before the Lord in the land of the living. My brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to be back home, and I pray the Lord protected you and your loved ones. Let us keep in our prayers our brothers and sisters in Laplace, Houma, Boutte, and the Gulf Region of our State of Louisiana who suffered so much and those who lost their lives may they rest in peace. Next week, we will be back with our regular bulletins. Please enjoy these reflections for this week schedule of readings.

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTROL

From toddlerhood to old age, we grow in mastery of our own lives, our bodies, and our destiny. This mastery is hard won, and we don't let go of autonomy easily. Much of this self-mastery involves the avoidance of pain or discomfort, so when we hear things like "take up your cross" and "lose your life," we tend to resist the message.

James says that faith without works is dead. Ouch! That is really a direct message! One way to look at this, as well as the part about losing our life to find it, is that faith is a process of more and more openness to God's direction of our lives. It is very hard for us to give up control, but perhaps what we are being asked to do is not to become passive and babyish, but to allow God to direct where our self-mastery will lead and what it will accomplish. We are asked to relinquish the need to control the results of our efforts; to risk, as Jesus did, the loss of everything we are working to achieve. We are asked to let God take

the lead and to control the results, even though we may never see those results.

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TODAY'S READINGS

First Reading — The Lord GOD is my help; who will prove me wrong? (Isaiah 50:5-9a).

Psalm — I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living (Psalm 116).

Second Reading — Faith, if it does not have works, is dead (James 2:14-18).

Gospel — Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:27-35).

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READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: 1 Tm 2:1-8; Ps 28:2, 7-9; Lk 7:1-10

Tuesday: Nm 21:4b-9; Ps 78:1bc-2, 34-38;

Phil 2:6-11; Jn 3:13-17

Wednesday: 1 Tm 3:14-16; Ps 111:1-6; Jn 19:25-27 or

Lk 2:33-35

Thursday: 1 Tm 4:12-16; Ps 111:7-10; Lk 7:36-50

Friday: 1 Tm 6:2c-12; Ps 49:6-10, 17-20; Lk 8:1-3

Saturday: 1 Tm 6:13-16; Ps 100:1b-5; Lk 8:4-15

Sunday: Wis 2:12, 17-20; Ps 54:3-8; Jas 3:16 — 4:3;

Mk 9:30-37

SAINTS AND SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Sunday: Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time;

Grandparents Day

Monday: St. John Chrysostom
 Tuesday: The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
 Wednesday: Our Lady of Sorrows; Yom Kippur
 (Jewish day of atonement) begins at sunset
 Thursday: Ss. Cornelius and Cyprian
 Friday: St. Robert Bellarmine;
 St. Hildegard of Bingen
 Saturday: Blessed Virgin Mary

FEAST OF FAITH

Offering and Intercessions

In this holy moment—with the consecrated bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ, upon the altar—we pray for a share in the fruits of Christ’s sacrifice. We offer to God what God has given to us, and we intercede for the Church and the world. We pray for the pope and for all the bishops, and we mention the bishop of our local church by name. We pray for the clergy and for all the people of God. We pray in a special way for those who have died. And we pray for ourselves, that one day, with Mary and all the saints, we may come to that place where Jesus already reigns. These prayers of intercession, like the General Intercessions earlier in the Mass, broaden our focus and remind us that the Eucharist is offered not just for those gathered, but for the salvation of the entire world. The Eucharistic Prayer leads us from an intense focus on Christ, present in the consecrated host in the hands of the priest, to a loving sweep of prayer that embraces the world.

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THE CROSS TO BEAR

If you bear the cross gladly, it will bear you.

—Thomas à Kempis

A GRANDPARENT RECIPE

A grandparent is a little bit parent, a little bit teacher, and a little bit best friend.

—Anonymous

Pastor Al®



“Unless I sit up in the front pew, Pastor Al, I can’t see much. Why don’t you install some stadium seating?”

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The Little Ones

Jim Burrows



Jesus said to them: “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and 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 the gospel’s will save it.” Mk 8:34-35

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