



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

Fr. David Rosenberg

visit us at <http://HopeCrossingMinistries.com/>

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Matt 16:24

Our Gospel this week begins with a traumatic exchange between Peter and Jesus, *"Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."* But nothing could drive home more strongly the point that suffering is the cost of discipleship and cannot be avoided by those who follow Jesus. Here we have not only a dramatic example of the truth that God's ways are not our ways but an encouragement to conform our ways to God's.

In this gospel, Peter leans dangerously close to isolation due to the evil one's temptation of the instinct for mortal survival. This is likened to the selling of one's soul to the devil. Isolation is the goal of the evil one, and is the definition of hell -- the total absence of being coeternal with the Trinity in light and spirit and love, willfully excised from the mystical Body of Christ. Taking up the Cross of Christ and following Him is the work of God's love -- the necessary destruction of self-inflicted isolation, in the perfection of personhood and eternal union within the mystical Body of Christ.

Peter, a mere creature of the mortal world, attempts to contain and derail the divine energy of the Creator because, in his limited pragmatic ways, Peter thinks, as all mortals do at times, that he can do things better than *He Who* created the universe. In defense of Peter, we can say that his error comes from uninformed and defective love. Much the same way as most of us are inclined to think first of the mortal survival of loved ones over their eternal souls. This defective movement can bring about the cancellation of Christ's life-giving sacrifice of himself. But, as happens with the inbreaking of grace and mercy, Jesus Christ shows Peter, and by extension us, a new standard for truth and love in friendship. Jesus came among us not primarily to establish easy-going human friendships. He came among us to redeem us from sin, lifting us, along with Himself, on His cross of suffering and salvation. We are shown through the lesson of this gospel that Peter was shown the Way to transform a potentially *un-graced* moment into a moment of illumination toward God's Kingdom on the journey to the New Jerusalem.

Later in this passage, Jesus offers several often-quoted sayings about discipleship: self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-respect and self-esteem. In reflection this week, sit at the feet of Jesus and take each one and ponder in a Lectio Divina moment of gratitude the wisdom lesson for your life.

The final verses remind us that we will be raised up in joyful consolation for being His disciples. *"What can one give in exchange for his life? The Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay all according to his conduct."* (Matt 16:24-28)

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus began to show his disciples
that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly
from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,
and be killed and on the third day be raised.
Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him,
"God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you."

He turned and said to Peter,
*"Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me.
You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."*

Then Jesus said to his disciples,
*"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 will find it.
What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world
and forfeit his life?
Or what can one give in exchange for his life?
For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory,
and then he will repay all according to his conduct."*

The Gospel of the Lord