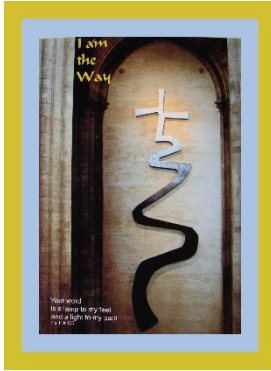


LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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TWENTY SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

30th August 2026

Matt. 16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life **Matt. 16:27** "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.

I am proposing that we focus on Jesus, seeing him as our exemplar, the one in whose destiny we his followers are called to share.

We capture the power of the passage by situating it historically, remembering that the incident it relates came at a very significant moment in the life of Jesus. It is one all human beings pass through - a moment of truth.

Up till then Jesus had been ministering in Galilee. He had met with great success at first. Opposition to him had grown, however, mainly from scribes and Pharisees. At this point in his life Jesus decided that the time had come for him to confront those opposing forces at the seat of their power, Jerusalem. It was a decision that would have tragic consequences, but the passage shows that he accepted them fully, basing himself on his understanding of every person's life journey.

The passage then invites us to celebrate similar 'moments of truth' we have lived through, when we chose a course of action which we knew would cause hurt to people we loved and admired, and would bring us rejection and pain. We celebrate the great men and women who have inspired us by the way they entered courageously into their moments of truth. We can also read it as the story of the church (or of a group within it) taking a decision to be more radical in its following of Jesus.

The passage is also a call to conversion in that it makes us more aware that we - as individuals and as communities - at times do not respond like Jesus. We pray that the spirit of Jesus will continue to live in our church, our families and the world.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Short-term loss is sometimes necessary for long-term gain, as a student studying, or an athlete training, can testify. When have you found that denying yourself proved to be worthwhile because of what you gained afterwards?
2. Jesus was teaching his followers that the path of discipleship would involve pain and suffering. His friend, Peter, would have none of it. Sometimes friends have a mistaken idea of what is for our good. What lessons have you learned about handling bad advice from a good friend?
3. Jesus knew that because his good news message was not acceptable to the authorities he would suffer and die. In spite of this, he trusted that the power of God would overcome evil. Have you seen a good news message survive even though opponents tried to stifle it?
4. Jesus promised that those who suffer for the kingdom would be rewarded. Perhaps, even in this earthly life, you have experienced reward for faithful discipleship. What have these rewards been?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - Intercom

There are three predictions of the Passion in Matthew, of which this is the first (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19). The first prediction is the only one followed by the negative reaction of Peter. From a historical point of view, moderate scholars would say that Jesus could have foreseen the outcome of his ministry, along the lines of what happened to penetrating prophets in the OT. The gospels, of course, were written a long time after the events and the same moderate scholars would also understand that the “predictions” have been rendered more precise in the light of what actually happened.

It is, of course, surprising that the firm denial by Peter should follow on his firm confession of faith and his commissioning as “the rock”! This is surely historical because Peter was a key figure in the early church and they would never have made up such an awkward story about him. We who are used to the teaching of a crucified Christ should not forget that the expectations surrounding the Messiah included restoration, peace, victory but never really suffering, not to speak of the gross humiliation of the cross. In that sense, Peter’s reaction expresses the reaction of the ordinary hearer and believer at the time. Perhaps even today?

Thought for the day

Jesus had the gift of saying things directly and plainly, with a power to penetrate all our defences and lead us to a new awareness. Today’s message puts before us the paradox of the Gospel: we gain life by letting go of it. If I put my happiness, my being loved, at the centre of my life, then I will surely fail, even though to be loved and to be happy are really important. If on the other hand I put the happiness of others first and love them unconditionally, then I too will know unselfish love and deep happiness. This is the very insight and wisdom that Jesus puts before us as the key not just to love but to life and within that, the key to authentic discipleship precisely as a way of life.

KIERAN O’MAHONY OSA - www.tarsus.ie

REFLECTION

Jeremiah’s suffering on account of God’s word points the way to the word of the cross which Jesus speaks in the gospel for today. To embrace Christianity is to die to oneself and this is the sacrifice we are asked to make on a daily basis. The reason is not that God wants us to suffer but that the path of love which the gospel entails is one that leads us away from ourselves and that is always painful. Unlike Jeremiah we have Jesus the Son of God, as our model on this journey. Not only does he show us the way, he walks the way with us.

SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand

Few of Jesus’ sayings have been so distorted as his call to ‘take up the cross’. That has led to great confusion over the Christian attitude toward suffering. Here are some things new need to remember, in order to follow the Crucified One more faithfully.

We don’t see in Jesus the suffering that we so often feel, caused by our own sin or our wrong ways of living. Jesus wasn’t affected by the suffering that comes from envy, resentment, inner emptiness, or selfish attachment to people and things. There is a kind of suffering in our lives (some experts say as much as 90%) that we ourselves have to overcome in order to follow Jesus.

Jesus doesn’t love suffering, or seek it for himself or others, as if suffering was especially pleasing to God. It is not true that we can follow Christ more closely by suffering needlessly or arbitrarily. What pleases God is not our suffering, but the attitude that we adopt toward suffering in faithfully following Christ.

Jesus commits all his energy to eliminating suffering from the world. His whole life was a struggle to free human beings from the suffering that comes from sickness, hunger, injustice, abuse, sin, or death.

Those who would follow him cannot ignore the people who suffer. On the contrary, our first task is to remove suffering from human life. As one theologian says “we have no right to happiness without others, or against others.” (Ignacio Larrañeta)

Finally, when Jesus sees the suffering caused by those who oppose his mission, he does not back away but embraces it, in an attitude of total faithfulness to the Father and unconditional service to humankind.

More than anything else, ‘taking up the cross’ means accepting the painful consequences that will surely come as a result of faithfully following Jesus. Christians will always have to take on that kind of rejection, pain and hurt. This is the suffering that we can only avoid by ceasing to follow Christ. This is the cross that each of us must carry if we are following in his footsteps.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - The Way Opened up by Jesus

Jesus died because if you love in the way Jesus loved and loves, the world will most certainly try to crush you. This is *agape* love, selfless love for people regardless of who they are or their circumstances. We remember today those who have followed Jesus’ path, speaking out against oppressive systems, seeking justice for those on the margins, often when it is dangerous to do so. One example is St. Oscar Romero who famously said on one occasion: “I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me I will rise again in the people of El Salvador.” People like Archbishop Romero put on ‘the mind of Christ’, selflessly giving of themselves for their communities, pouring out love, demanding truth and justice for those who are helpless. The cross is a symbol of much suffering in our world, but it is also a symbol of liberation, because it is through the cross that restoration and healing comes. This is what Peter and the disciples and Matthew’s readers will eventually learn.

Jesus lived agape, a sacrificial love, giving of himself for others. Who models this way in your community? What crosses do they bear? Who gets behind them?

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper