



**Blessed Sacrament Parish**  
**Homily by Father Christopher Comerford**  
**September 3, 2017 Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Reading I Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19**

**Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16**

**Reading II Romans 8:27-27**

**Gospel Mathew 13:24-43**

**Homily**

Oh how quickly things change. Peter is the rock, the rock on which Jesus will build his church. Then Jesus tells them how he is going to die, and suffer and rise from the dead. So, Peter is going to straighten Jesus out. The Messiah is not supposed to suffer and die. The Messiah is going to come in riding on his white horse, he is going to lead the people, he is going to drive the Romans out and the Jews will be back in power. That is what the Messiah is going to be.

“God, forbid, Lord. No such thing will ever happen to you,” Peter said to Jesus. He is Jesus’s counselor now because he is the “rock.” “Get behind me, Satan,” Jesus replies. “You’re an obstacle to me.” From the rock to Satan, that’s a big difference. It can happen. Your thinking is — as man does, but not as God does. How hard that is for us. We have this idea that life should be free from pain, free from suffering. It doesn’t work too well, does it? But we have an idea and that’s the goal. But that is not the plan. Sometimes the good only comes from suffering.

Peter missed the heart of that message as we often do. We don’t want to do things that are difficult. We want to give up if it is hard. We want to do something else. It is hard sometimes to see that. So what are we called to do? “Whoever wishes to be my follower,” Jesus says, “my disciple, you must deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.” That is a challenge that is not easily taken. It is very hard for us to get past the idea when we often think we are the center of the universe. Everything revolves around us. The disciples of Jesus Christ were called to deny themselves and think of other people first. Be selfless rather than selfish. Such a challenge.

The world says, “Be all you can be, take it all in, take care of yourself.” But Jesus shows us that true fulfillment comes from thinking of others first. It’s true and we know that. But it’s hard to get to that point. And when we get to that point it is amazing. “Take up your cross and follow me.” Most of us know what the cross, or crosses are in our lives. If you don’t, you will. It will appear. There are some great challenges and some are very heavy. Some are almost overwhelming. We are called to pick them up and walk with them, and follow in the path that Jesus walked. It is such a challenge to do that each day. The cross gets heavy, and sometimes we’d just like to drop it or set it down.

Jesus didn't do that. We know what he endured on the cross. We know what he endured carrying the cross. For us. And that is what we are called to do. It is wonderful that we have a beautiful crucifix to remind us of what Jesus did — the cross the he bore. As I look upon his cross it makes my cross look a little easier, a little lighter. I can think "yes" I can do that. If Jesus did this, then I can carry the burden I am called to carry.

To have the willingness to lay it all down. To lose your life for the sake of Christ is to really find it. But if your whole life is about making things good for yourself, you lose it. The paradox: To gain life you have to lose it — at least be willing to and it is a challenge to really follow this and to put it into our hearts, the challenge to put Christ first.

"What profit would it be to gain the whole world and forfeit his life." I really like the older translation that said, "... to lose your soul" because that is what it is. When we desire possessions and those possessions possess us, we lose who we are. It is not worth it to try and gain everything in the world and lose who we are. Such a challenge. I love this phrase and I heard it several years ago, "You never see a hearse pulling a U-haul." You can't take it with you. It is kind of funny though because on Facebook there was a picture of a hearse pulling a U-haul. It kind of ruined that idea, but I bet they weren't headed to the cemetery. But it is a great reminder because ultimately it is about who has the most toys when it should be about relationships. It is hard, it is a challenge. But when you really learn to trust God, it is amazing what can happen.

I love Jeremiah's honesty in the first reading. "God you tricked me. And I allowed myself to be tricked. Duped." Duped is an interesting word. "You drew me in. You asked me to be your voice. And what do I get for it? They want to kill me. They don't accept anything that I say. It isn't about your message now, it is me that they focus on. I am the target." And then Jeremiah says, "Even though I want to turn away, I can't." He knew the love of God and that God was with him and that even though it was difficult, he couldn't walk away.

That is what we hope to have — to trust God and to have that strength from him even when things are tough. The cross can be heavy. One night a man had a dream and in that dream he was carrying a heavy cross. He's walking and he meets Jesus. He says, "Jesus, my cross is too heavy. Can you give me a lighter one?" So Jesus takes him into a room filled with many crosses of different sizes and weights. So he looks around the room and he sees the smallest cross and he says, "That's the one for me. Jesus, give me that cross, instead of the one I am carrying." And Jesus looks at him and says, "My son, That is the one you came in with."

Perspective. Perspective. Let's pray to have the strength to do what Jesus asks us to do. "Deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow me." Let's pray for the strength to carry that in our daily lives."

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