

blessed fruit of they womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

“The End” Notes

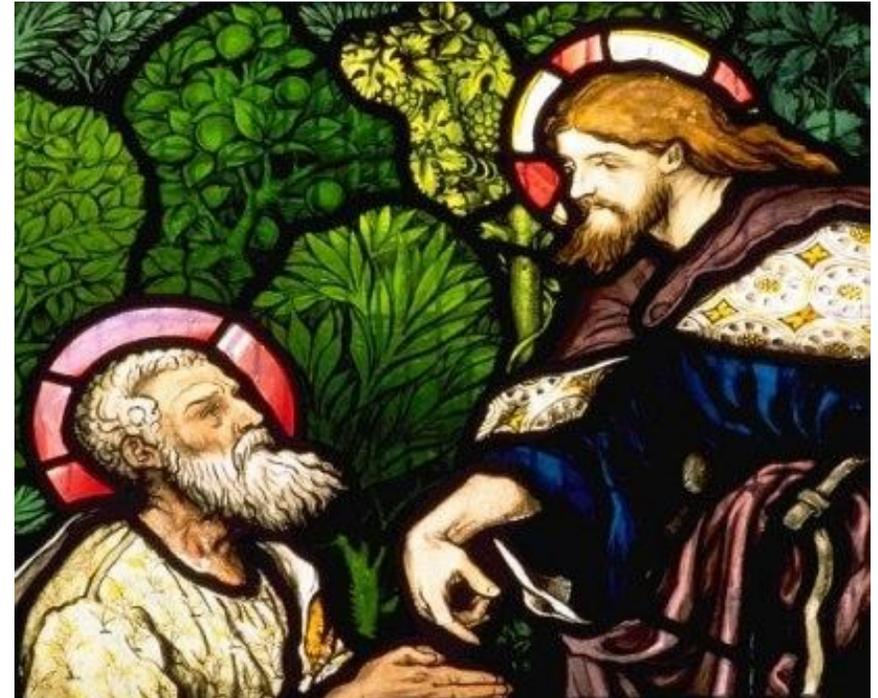
- [1] In Conversation with God, Fernandez pg. 7 vol. 4
- [2] Mark 6:17-29
- [3] Mk. 6:14
- [4] Mal. 3: 23-24
- [5] Luke 24:19
- [6] Luke 24:26
- [7] Mark 1:24
- [8] John Paul II, Address, 7 January 1987
- [9] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 5, 2.1 pg. 8
- [10] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 5, 2.3
- [11] Navaree Bible Commentary pg. 124
- [12] Spiritual Reading in this packet
- [13] NAB Footnotes
- [14] Romans 12:1
- [15] Navaree Bible Commentary pgs. 125, 124
- [16] J. Escriva, The Way of the Cross, II, 5
- [17] John Paul I, Address, 13 September 1978
- [18] J. Escriva, The Way of the Cross, II, 5
- [19] Navaree Commentary pg. 124
- [20] Isaiah 50:6
- [21] 1 Jn. 4:9
- [22] St. Jerome Biblical Commentary Mk. 8:32b.
- [23] Jean-Baptiste Chautard, O.C.S.O; The Soul of the Apostolate
- [24] Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., Modern Catholic Dictionary, page 461
- [25] Romans 12:2
- [26] Spritual Reading in this Packet
- [27] CCC 1615
- [28] <http://remnantband.com/index.cfm?load=news&newsarticle=148>
- [29] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 5, 2.2 pg. 9
- [30] Navarre Commentary pg. 124
- [31] cf. John 15:1-6
- [32] Isaiah 50:7

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24th Sunday of Ordinary Time Doing Whatever It Takes

Lessons and Discussions

Page 4 – Who do you say I am?

“But who do you say that I am?”

Page 7 – Complicating Our Lives

“You are thinking not as God does”

Page 10 – Willing to do whatever it takes

“...take up his cross, and follow me”

Introit Entrance Antiphon – Daily Roman Missal

This should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred. The chant leader could chant the first time and then all can join the second and third. Another song can be substituted, but should have the same theme.

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you
That your prophets be found true.
Hear the prayers of your servant,
And of your people Israel.

Alternate options:

- All in All
- Amazing Love
- Breathe
- More than Enough
- Alive in You (Remnant)
- Do you know Him? (Remnant)
- Who are You? (Remnant)

Collect – Roman Missal

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Look upon us, O God, Creator and ruler of all things, and, that we may feel the working of your mercy, grant that we may serve you with all our heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Gospel Reading – Mark 8:27-35 – Roman Missal

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark
- Glory to you O Lord

Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Marian Antiphon – Salve Regina – Simple Tone

IV. ANTIPHON SALVE REGINA, SIMPLE TONE
From First Vespers of the Feast of the Blessed Trinity to None on Saturday before the First Sunday of Advent.

Ant.
5.
S
Alve, Re-gi-na, * ma-ter mi-se-ri-córdi-æ : Vi-ta, dulcé-do, et spes nostra,
salve. Ad te clamá-mus, éx-su-les, fi-li-i He-væ Ad te suspi-rá-mus,
gemén-tes et flentes in hac lacrimá-rum valle. E-ia ergo, Advocá-ta
nostra, il-los tu-os mi-se-ri-córdes ócu-los ad nos convér-te. Et Je-sum,
bene-díctum fructum ventris tu-i, nobis post hoc exs-li-um osténde.
O clemens : O pi-a : O dulcis * Virgo Ma-ri-a.

- V. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.
- R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi

Let us pray. O almighty and everlasting God, who, by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, didst prepare the body and soul of Mary, glorious Virgin and Mother, to become the worthy habitation of Thy Son: grant that we may be delivered from present evils, and from everlasting death, by her gracious intercession, in whose commemoration we rejoice. Through the same Christ our Lord, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

English Translation

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the

branch depends on the vine for its source of life. If the branch leaves the vine it withers and dies. It is then thrown into the fire. [31] In our personal lives we should take comfort in this. As it says in the first reading, "The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; Therefore I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame." [32] With great confidence, we must be like the apostles and with great joy proclaim the Good News in our homes, workplaces, and country. We must never be afraid to lose our life for the sake of Christ because as Jesus as told us, if we are willing to give up everything for Him we will gain everything in Him.

To choose truth and Jesus means to pick up our cross, to reject truth is to abandon Jesus and our cross. **Which will you choose? Are we willing to do whatever it takes?**

Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – Morning Offering

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, for the intention of all our associates, the intentions of our Bishops, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "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 and that of the gospel will save it."

The Gospel of the Lord.
- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings - Feast of Saints Cornelius and Cyprian – September 16th

From Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr
"A faith that is ready and unshaken"

Cyprian sends greetings to his brother Cornelius. My very dear brother, we have heard of the glorious witness given by your courageous faith. On learning of the honor you had won by your witness, we were filled with such joy that we felt ourselves sharers and companions in your praiseworthy achievements. After all, we have the same Church, the same mind, the same unbroken harmony. Why then should a priest not take pride in the praise given to a fellow priest as though it were given to him? What brotherhood fails to rejoice in the happiness of its brothers wherever they are?

Words cannot express how great was the exultation and delight here when we heard of your good fortune and brave deeds: how you stood out as leader of your brothers in their declaration of faith, while the leader's confession was enhanced as they declared their faith. You led the way to glory, but you gained many companions in that glory; being foremost in your readiness to bear witness on behalf of all, you prevailed on your people to become a single witness. We cannot decide which we ought to praise, your own ready and unshaken faith or the love of your brothers who would not leave you. While the courage of the bish-

op who thus led the way has been demonstrated, at the same time the unity of the brotherhood who followed has been manifested. Since you have one heart and one voice, it is the Roman Church as a whole that has thus born witness.

Dearest brother, bright and shining is the faith which the blessed Apostle praised in your community. He foresaw in the spirit the praise your courage deserves and the strength that could not be broken; he was heralding the future when he testified to your achievements; his praise of the fathers was a challenge to the sons. Your unity, your strength have become shining examples of these virtues to the rest of the brethren.

Divine providence has now prepared us. God's merciful design has warned us that the day of our own struggle, our own contest, is at hand. By that shared love which binds us close together, we are doing all we can to exhort our congregation, to give ourselves unceasingly to fastings, vigils and prayers in common. These are the heavenly weapons which give us the strength to stand firm and endure; they are the spiritual defenses, the God-given armaments that protect us.

Let us then remember one another, united in mind and heart. Let us pray without ceasing, you for us, we for you; by the love we share we shall thus relieve the strain of these great trials.

Responsory – Office of Readings

We are warriors now, fighting on the battlefield of faith, and God sees all we do; the angels watch and so does Christ.

– What honor and glory and joy, to do battle in the presence of God, and to have Christ approve our victory.

Let us arm ourselves in full strength and prepare ourselves for the ultimate struggle with blameless hearts, true faith and unyielding courage.

– What honor and glory and joy, to do battle in the presence of God, and to have Christ approve our victory.

Who do you say I am? – Lesson and Discussion

“But who do you say that I am?”

“There are many questions in this life which we can safely ignore without consequence. There are other questions which have more important relation to ourselves and to our society.”[1]

life.”[27]

A very special example of the embodiment of this mutual service to each other is in the Croatian marriage tradition. “When a young couple is preparing for marriage” the priest says to them “You have found your cross. And it is a cross to be loved, to be carried, a cross not to be thrown away, but to be cherished.’ When the bride and groom set off for the church, they bring a crucifix with them. The priest blesses the crucifix, which takes on a central role during the exchange of vows. The bride places her right hand on the crucifix and the groom places his hand over hers. Thus the two hands are bound together on the cross. The priest covers their hands with his stole as they proclaim their vows to be faithful, according to the rites of the Church. The priest explains that the bride and groom do not then kiss each other, they rather kiss the cross. They know that they are kissing the source of love. Anyone close enough to see their two hands joined over the cross understands clearly that if the husband abandons his wife or if the wife abandons her husband, they let go of the cross. And if they abandon the cross, they have nothing left. They have lost everything for they have abandoned Jesus. They have lost Jesus.”[28]

What words (teachings) of Jesus do we protest? What of what Jesus teaches or says does not fit into our ideas? How can we, like Saint Peter, show a deeper faith and obedience?

Why does Jesus call Peter “Satan”? Jesus is not saying that Peter is Satan himself. What He is saying is that, Peter, like Satan, is only thinking of himself and of the world. Peter is not thinking of God. “It was with these same words that Jesus rejected the Devil’s temptations in the desert. Jesus will not be thwarted either by friend or foe in his determination to fulfill the will of the Father.”[29] “He wants to affirm once again that his mission is spiritual, not earthly, and that therefore it cannot be understood by using mere human criteria: it is governed by God’s designs, which were that Jesus should redeem us through his Passion and Death. So too, for a Christian, suffering, united with Christ, is also a means of salvation.”[30]

What is our call to action after learning of the sacrificial love of Jesus? We are called to be one with a God who has given everything to us. If we remove ourselves from God who has done everything for us then we will have nothing. Jesus says we must be one with Him as the vine is with its branches. The

that there are no unchangeable principles of human behavior, either because all truth is relative or because there are not inherently evil actions since everything depends on other factors, such as customs, conventions, or social approval.[24]

Even if we believe in absolute truth, it is easy to fall into the error of relativism because we don't always live out what these truths demand. When we reject truth, we are rejecting a person as well. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, the life." To embrace truth is to conform to Christ, and to conform to Christ, is a dying to self. "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." [25]

If we believe and embrace the truths of the Church, how do we arm ourselves against the influences of the world and "pick up our cross"? Saints Cyprian and Cornelius knew the struggle of the Christian life first hand and we see this in the letter of Saint Cyprian to Saint Cornelius. "Divine providence has now prepared us. God's merciful design has warned us that the day of our own struggle, our own contest, is at hand. By that shared love which binds us close together, we are doing all we can to exhort our congregation, to give ourselves unceasingly to fastings, vigils and prayers in common. These are the heavenly weapons which give us the strength to stand firm and endure; they are the spiritual defenses, the God-given armaments that protect us." [26]

In the vocation of marriage, for example, we can see how Jesus arms us to take on the world and "pick up our cross". In the married life, God expects each spouse to lead the other spouse to Him. They will help each other carry their crosses and find their true love from the creator of love, God. "This unequivocal insistence on the indissolubility of the marriage bond may have left some perplexed and could seem to be a demand impossible to realize. However, Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy – heavier than the Law of Moses. By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, he himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian

Before asking His big question, Jesus raises the small question of who do people say He is. While we do not know if He is talking about everyone as a whole or just His enemies, the disciples mention three distinct people: John the Baptist, Elijah, and a prophet.

Why would people think Jesus was John the Baptist? At this time in the Gospel, John the Baptist has already been killed [2]. Many people were questioning if Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected. [3] The only reason people would have questioned this is if they had never seen Jesus and John the Baptist together while they were both alive, because if they had, namely at the baptism in the Jordan, they would have known that they were two different individuals. Obviously this theory and statement is wrong.

Why would people think Jesus was Elijah? The Jewish people believe Jesus was Elijah because the scriptures prophesied that Elijah would be the one to come ahead of the Messiah. [4] Since they had not seen Elijah, they assumed Jesus must be Elijah. However, earlier in Matthew's Gospel, He had already told His disciples that Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist. Later, at the Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah are next to Jesus conversing with Him, we can conclusively confirm that Jesus is not Elijah.

Why would people think Jesus was just a prophet? The people saw Jesus as a prophet because he was teaching and proclaiming the truth about God. Additionally, it was considered normal for prophets to suffer, but it was unthinkable that the Messiah would suffer. Since Jesus suffered and died, some thought that he must have been a prophet. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus works to remove this misconception when the two disciples referred to Jesus not as the Messiah but as "Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people..." [5] Jesus then says to them, "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" [6] There is a similarity between the thought process of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and that of Saint Peter in today's Gospel. When Jesus revealed to the disciples "the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected," it did not fit with what the disciples believe the job description of the Messiah to be.

Furthermore, if Jesus was just a prophet, this was the time to affirm that claim. Instead, He digs deeper and asks a second question, “But who do you say that I am?”

Why does Jesus ask the apostles directly? He was testing their faith. Jesus knows who He is, and He knows what other people think of Him, but now He wants the line drawn in the sand. Either they are with the other people, or they are with Him. Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that He is not John the Baptist, or Elijah, or a mere prophet.

Peter is the first person who proclaims that Jesus is none of those things but is in fact the Messiah, the Son of God. Interestingly enough, in the first chapter of Mark’s Gospel, a fallen angel (demon) is the first to openly profess, “I know who you are – the Holy One of God.”[7] What the demons knew immediately, it took the disciples until chapter eight. However, knowledge is not enough. We must react to this knowledge in faith. While the disciples do not clearly understand like they demon did, they do have a little faith. Jesus gives them the opportunity to respond in faith to his proclamation that ‘Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.’”

Jesus knew what could be done with the small faith of the disciples. Jesus says, “If you have the faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to [this] mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” At this point in the Life of Christ, the disciples have faith the size of a mustard seed, but their faith grows and flourishes to continue the Church that Jesus started!

How does Saint Peter’s response affect us today? When Peter gave his answer, he had been with Jesus for two years, watching and listening to him day in and day out. “In our case also, in order to make a more conscious profession of faith in Jesus Christ, we must, like Peter, listen attentively and carefully. We must follow in the school of the first disciples, who had become his witnesses and our teachers. At the same time we must accept the experience and testimony of no less than twenty centuries of history marked by the Master’s question and enriched by the immense chorus of responses of the faithful of all times and places.”[8]

When Jesus asks us “Who do you say that I am?” “There is only one valid answer...the Messiah...the person who is of the great-

What was God willing to do? In Sunday’s first reading, we find out that God will give us everything. He says, “I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.”[20] Jesus was willing to lay down His life and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, the scribes, Jews, Romans, Gentiles, and even his own followers. God loves us so much that he sent His Only-Begotten Son into the world to die on a Cross and rise again in three days so “that we may live through him”. [21] Reflecting on and praying the Sorrowful Mysteries or the Stations of Cross helps us to remember how much God is willing to do for us.

[See Lesson – Physical meditations on the Sorrowful Mysteries]

Why does Peter protest Jesus’ statement about His Passion? Peter protests because to Peter, Jesus’ words are extreme and strange. This is the first time Peter (and the other disciples) heard that the Lord must suffer and die, and it makes him uncomfortable. “This is proof that in spite of his calling Jesus a Messiah, Peter still does not grasp that this function entails suffering and death of Jesus.”[22]

At the heart of Saint Peter’s protest and our own is the fear of suffering. When Jesus says that he must suffer greatly, it is implied that the followers of Jesus also must suffer. Although there is suffering and rejection, there is life. As Jesus tells us in the parable of the vine and the branches, we are “grafted on to the God-man.”[23] Because the God-man was grafted on to the Cross, we therefore living the Life of Christ cannot escape the suffering and rejection nor may we escape the life and fruit of the passion, death, and resurrection.

Why is there a “fear around, a fear of the Cross”? We fear the unpleasantness of the Cross and what embracing the Cross will mean to our life. In other words we say, “If I believe and embrace this truth, things in my life will have to change.”

When faced with the truth we either live the truth or we reject the truth out of fear for what it means to our lives—there is no other way. Unfortunately, in the culture today, there is a pervasive idea that we don’t have to choose or reject truth because this is no “absolute truth”, also known as relativism. Relativists claim that truth depends entirely on variable factors such as person, place, time, and circumstances. Moral relativism holds

alive since sin is a deprivation of good. Jesus says, “A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” This abundant life is possible because of Jesus’s death. “In the Passion, the Cross ceased to be a symbol of punishment and became instead a sign of victory. The Cross is the emblem of the Redeemer: *in quo est salus, vita et resurrection nostra*: there lies our salvation, our life and our resurrection”.[16]

[See Link to Liturgy Lesson - The Cross: Trophy of Victory]

How are we to live by losing our lives to Christ? First, we must remember that we are sinners and we can only reach Heaven through Our Lord Jesus Christ. A good prayer to recite often is “Lord, take me as I am, with my defects, with my shortcomings, but make me become as You want me to be”[17] We should think of our lives and how we live them each day—did we dedicate our days’ work, joys, sufferings, trials, or ever minor annoyances to the Lord?

Finally, we should learn to embrace our crosses, our sufferings, and hardships with Christ. We should only unite ourselves to Jesus even stronger and see them not as condemnation, but a chance to win our salvation! “There is a kind of fear around, a fear of the Cross, of our Lord’s Cross. What has happened is that people have begun to regard as crosses all the unpleasant things that crop up in life, and they do not know how to take them as God’s children should, with supernatural outlook. So much so, that they are even removing the roadside crosses set up by our forefathers...!”[18]

Willing to do whatever it takes – Lesson and Discussion

“take up his cross, and follow me”

In today’s readings we hear that God is willing to do whatever it takes to bring salvation to all and correct the wrongs.

Why does Jesus speak of His Passion? This is the first time we hear Jesus speaking of His Passion in Mark’s Gospel. Jesus will foretell His Passion two more times after this. He specifically mentions the cross. “...he (Jesus) was well aware that in fulfilling his mission he would be brought to death on a cross; this is why he speaks clearly about his Passion.”[19]

est importance to my destiny, my happiness, my successes and failures in this life and hereafter. Our happiness is not in our health, our worldly successes or our ability to get what we want. Our life will have been worth something if and when we fall in love with Christ. All our problems can be resolved if we are close to him.”[9]

Why will our life only be worth something if and when we fall in love with Christ? What is the worth of a man? We usually answer this question in terms of temporal or earthly goods, but that only tells us the worth or value when a person is on earth. A man is more than just his temporal life and good. In weighing the worth of man, we must consider the temporal and the spiritual—earthly and heavenly goods. Jesus Christ is both true God and true man. He became man so that man can share in this divine nature. If the goal of man is to become divine, then the goal of the temporal is to prepare and gain the eternal. The eternal is of greater worth and we can only appreciate its worth when we fall in love with Christ, the one who shares it with us.

VIDEO – An excerpt from CATHOLICISM – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 6:12

<http://youtu.be/1Wf-h2BLzOA?t=25s>

In this episode from the Catholicism Series, Fr. Barron points out what Jesus is getting at when He asks this question “Who do you say I am” and the ramifications of our answer to His question.

Why does Jesus tell the apostles to not tell anyone He is the Messiah? This is the first time Jesus does not allow them to speak openly about who He is. He forbids them to say anything because He still must fulfill his Messianic duties of His Passion and death, as He points out in Mark 8:31.

Complicating Our Lives – Lesson and Discussion

“You are thinking not as God does”

There is a quote from the movie *Gettysburg* in which one of the characters criticizes his friend by saying, “You certainly do have a talent for trivializing the momentous and complicating the obvious.” “Jesus complicates our life in a way no other person can. He asks us to follow him through a complete identification of our will with his own. This is why following his sharp words to Peter, He told his Apostles: ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever

would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.'(Mark 8:34-35)".[10]

Why is Jesus demanding more from his followers, “If any man would come after me...”? In the first part of the Gospel reading Jesus is testing their faith, “Who do you say that I am?” Now that Peter has spoken up to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, He pushes them to deepen their faith. Like the disciples, for us today, it is not enough to just say “Jesus Christ is Lord!” If we truly believe, we must live with him—our lives must be transformed in Him! “The Christian life, lived as it should be lived, with all its demands, is also a cross which one has to carry, following Christ. Jesus’ words, which must have seemed extreme to his listeners, indicate the standard he requires his followers to live up to. He does not ask for short-lived enthusiasm or occasional dedication; he asks everyone to renounce himself, to take up his cross and follow him.”[11]

What causes “short-lived enthusiasm” and “occasional dedication” and why is it bad for us?

When we base our faith and life on feelings, we are building on a weak foundation. Feelings are short-lived; they come and go. Neither faith nor life should be based on feelings. The virtue of faith is a strong foundation because it is rooted in the eternal, which by nature is not “short-lived”.

The Church tells us to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, but if we are only occasionally dedicated, we may just go when we “feel like it”. That occasional dedication also can plague our prayer life. Prayer is not to be just fit into our lives, but rather it is our communication with Jesus: the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Saint Cyprian, in his letter to Saint Cornelius, repeats the saying of Saint Paul, “Let us pray without ceasing, you for us, we for you; by the love we share we shall thus relieve the strain of these great trials.”[12] Do we have a passion, a zeal, for prayer and liturgy?

Can we have passion and zeal in the Christian life? We are called to enthusiasm and joy, but the enthusiasm that Christ calls us to is not “short-lived” or shallow. Our life in Christ is life eternal, the opposite of short-lived! The beatitude: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt 5:6) is not short-lived. When we hunger and thirst for physical food, the feeling is intense but then subsides. When we hunger and thirst for righteousness, the intensity may be less, but it does not sub-

side, for our hearts are restless until they rest in God. Jesus challenges the disciples to “come after me”, a challenge that invites them to life eternal and a life of enthusiasm.

What does Jesus mean by “whoever wishes to save his life will lose it”? While it sounds complicated, Jesus makes it extremely easy for us. The only way to live forever is to follow him, and that means that we must die to our self. Here, Jesus uses the word “life” in a double sense: both earthly and eternal life. An earthly death brings about an end to the earthly life, but does not destroy the eternal life of the soul. “Understood in this way, we can grasp the paradoxical meaning of our Lord’s phrase: whoever wishes to save his (earthly) life will lose his (eternal) life. But whoever loses his (earthly) life for me and the Gospel, will save his (eternal) life. Life seen as mere self-centered earthly existence and lived in denial of Christ ends in destruction, but when lived in loyalty to Christ, despite earthly death, it arrives at fullness of life.”[13]

To expound on this idea, in his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul says, “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, you spiritual worship.”[14] Saint Paul in uses the word “living” and “sacrifice” together. Saint Paul is challenging us to be “living dead things”, we are dead to sin and self, but alive in Christ.

What does saving one’s (earthly) life mean? As it was said earlier, saving one’s life means to die to one’s selfish desires. “It means living this life as if there were none other – letting oneself be controlled by the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” Instead of worrying so much about our earthly life, the “present life should be evaluated in the light of this eternal life: life on earth is not definitive, but transitory and relative; it is a means to be used to achieve definitive life in heaven.”[15]

[See Link to Liturgy Lesson – Temptation]

How do we know all of this (losing our life to save it) to be true? We know because Jesus said and did everything He prophesied here. He in fact took up His cross, suffered persecution, and an earthly death. However, because of His obedience, He was raised on the third day and has power not only over souls, but also the power to raise up our earthly lives. We do not need to wait until our physical death to have our life raised up, though. Jesus elevates our life now. To live in sin is to be less