

**The Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**June 19, 2016**

Today's passage from the Gospel of Luke marks the beginning of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. For the next ten chapters, Luke will give a very detailed account of Jesus' journey towards the time when He will take up His cross in obedience to the Father...obedience that was made perfect through love and sacrifice. Luke gives us so much detail in order to show that Jesus' journey towards Calvary reflects the journey of every Christian disciple.

This point is made very clear when Jesus addresses the twelve and says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." And while Jesus in our passage today is speaking to the twelve disciples, Luke wants to make it clear that Jesus is speaking to all believers who read or hear these words. He wants to make it clear for each of us that taking up one's cross is the very heart of what it means to bear the name of Christ.

But what does "taking up our cross" mean for you and I on a practical level? What does it mean for us to take up our cross...not on certain occasions or when the mood hits us or when it's convenient...but every day of our lives?

It means that each one of us must be willing to lose everything for the sake of the kingdom and our salvation. It means that we must be willing to lose our possessions, our security, our reputation and even life itself for the sake of Christ and others. It's only by taking up our cross every day that we are truly free from the false illusions of self...free from thinking and acting as though we are sufficient in and of ourselves to meet every need.

Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem demonstrates clearly that living a life free of attachments is a sharing in the reign of God. Jesus' lesson to His disciples and us today is that we are to give ourselves over completely to Christ with no holding back. And this daily self-giving can only be possible if we are willing to make God *the* motivating factor in our life.

When Jesus says we must pick up our cross daily He is, in fact, asking us certain questions: "You say you will follow me to the ends of the earth, but will you really?" "Will you follow me even when you have no idea of the outcome?" "Will you follow me if I demand that you give up the security of your home and all of your carefully laid plans?"

Such questions don't lead us to a life free of suffering...but the suffering we endure will certainly lead us to a mature life of faith, purification and eventual glory. And we might not always want to go willingly. This type of self-sacrifice and trust is in fact a mystery that requires ongoing fidelity to the will of God day after day.

Sometimes we'll get it right...and sometimes we'll falter. But we must remember too that we are in good company. Think especially of St. Peter who seems to be the first to proclaim the truth that Jesus is "the Christ of God." In today's Gospel passage, Peter gets it right. But as we all know, Peter also faltered even so far as publicly denying three times he even knew Jesus.

But such was God's grace in His life, that Peter's personal failures were not the final word. We can all take a great deal of comfort in knowing that God's grace and mercy far exceeds our moments of failure and doubt.

We may well say, "Oh sure, it was easy for Peter, he knew Jesus intimately and travelled with Him". Fortunately, we too can know Jesus as intimately as Peter knew Him and all we have to do is open up our hearts to him through prayer and listening to his word in Sacred Scriptures! And if that weren't enough, he gave us all the graces we need for our own personal journeys towards Cavalry through the sacraments.

So as we approach the altar of our Lord today to become one with our Savior and one another through the reception of His precious Body and Blood, we may ask the Lord to give us the graces necessary to live the life of discipleship that will not only transform ourselves, but the very world in which we live.