



PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 29TH/30TH AUGUST 2020



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Jesus I Trust in You

POPE: CHRISTIANS CALLED TO SERVE GOD AND NEIGHBOUR

Pope Francis says “taking up the Cross” means imitating Jesus by expending our life in service to God and neighbour. In Sunday’s Gospel (Matt.16:21-27), Jesus speaks to His disciples about the mystery of His Passion, Death, and Resurrection – a teaching, Pope Francis said, that the disciples are not yet able to understand, because their faith “is still immature, and too closely tied to the mentality of the world.” The Pope said that for Peter and the other disciples – and for us too – the Cross is seen as “a ‘stumbling block’, whereas Jesus considers the ‘stumbling block’ [to be] escaping the Cross, which would mean avoiding the Father’s will.” This, the Pope said, is why Jesus rebukes Peter so strongly, saying to him, “Get behind me, Satan!”

BECOMING TRUE DISCIPLES OF JESUS

In the Gospel, Jesus then immediately explains, “If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Pope Francis said that in this saying, Jesus “indicates the way of the true disciple, showing two attitudes”: renouncing oneself, which means a real conversion; and taking up one’s cross, which “is not just a matter of patiently enduring daily tribulations, but of bearing with faith and responsibility that part of toil and suffering that the struggle against evil entails.”

PARTICIPATION IN THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD

Focusing on the latter, the Pope said, “Thus, the task of ‘taking up the cross’ becomes participating with Christ in the salvation of the world.” Images of the Cross should be a “sign of our desire to be united with Christ through lovingly serving our brothers and sisters, especially the littlest and the weakest,” Pope Francis said; adding, “The Cross is the holy sign of God’s love and of Jesus’s sacrifice, and is not to be reduced to a superstitious object or an ornamental necklace.” Instead, he explained, when we look at a crucifix, we should reflect on the fact that Jesus “has accomplished His mission, giving life, spilling His blood for the forgiveness of sins.” In order to be His disciples, Pope Francis said, we in turn must “imitate Him, expending our life unreservedly for love of God and neighbour.” (By Vatican News).

CONGRATULATIONS BOYS!

A big congratulations to all the young adults of O’Connell’s school who received the Sacrament of Confirmation on Saturday 22nd August 2020. We also wish all the boys God’s grace in making their First Holy Communion yesterday 29th August 2020. Thank you to all the Teachers for their invaluable support and help.

PUT ON THE MIND OF CHRIST

In today’s Gospel (Matt 16:21-27) Jesus is teaching us that the conversion of body, soul and mind is a process that happens with the passing of the sacred time that He gives us on earth. Jesus presents Peter as our example. The entire Mission of Jesus is toward the Cross, in order to Rise to New Life. The revelation of atonement (making amends for our sins) is through acts of humility and sacrifice (Cross). Peter did not understand this at the beginning, but would change in time. Many Christians today are unaware of the purpose of the Cross in their life. We are called to crucify or die to our sinful self in order to give birth to a new spiritual life in Christ - that will lead us to an Eternal Life. The Cross represents Sacrifice, Death and New Life. In the first reading today, Jeremiah (20:7-9) teaches us that conversion is like a spiritual seduction, where God invites us to fall in love with Him. The feeling is like *a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones.*

SERVICE OF LOVE

To follow Jesus, we must begin living life as He sees it. We must *put on the mind of Christ.* Jesus clearly tells us today that if *anyone wants to be a follower of Mine, let him renounce himself and take up his Cross and follow Me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for My sake will find it.* If self-denial is found to be too hard a lesson, it is no more than what Jesus practised to redeem us. Jesus is completely prepared to suffer and die, if the service of Love demands it – and it will. Are we willing to die to our sinful ways and live a pure holy life for the service of Love (God), in order to follow Christ? St Paul says today (Rom 12:1-2) that we are *not to model ourselves on the behaviour of the world around us, but let our behaviour change, modelled by our new mind.* The is the mind of Christ.

MIND OF SATAN’S IS FULL OF PRIDE

Peter did not understand the mystery of the Cross and rejected the idea, because he unwittingly attempted to tempt Jesus to be a Messiah of honour and glory without Sacrifice, Suffering and the Cross. St. Peter’s **pride**, which is the mind of the devil, thought he knew better than Jesus. He brought Christ aside to steer Him away from God’s Plan of Salvation. Jesus recognised Satan’s influence on Peter and said commandingly, *Get behind Me, Satan! You are an obstacle in My path, because the way you think is not God’s Way but man’s.* Jesus places Himself between Peter and Satan. He does the same with us. St. Peter will again attempt to overrule God’s Plan at the Last Supper, when he tried to stop Jesus washing his feet (Matt 26:14-39). Jesus’ harsh words recalled His own testing by Satan in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11). Jesus could only return to Heaven through the Cross and it is the same Way for us too, as it was for the Good Thief on Calvary.

ROAD TO HEAVEN

Satan’s only interest is to remove us from the road to Glory, *the Heavenly Jerusalem*, by putting us on the road to Hell. St. Paul tells us today that the road to Heaven is subject to redemptive suffering. He says that we are called to *offer our living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God.* This means that our bodies are spiritual altars in which we are expected to offer them as a living sacrifice of holiness, prayer, self-restraining, purifying, merciful and loving dwellings to honour God and neighbour. This life-call of God to travel on the road to Heaven opposes Satan’s death-call to travel on the road to Hell. Satan tempts us to offer our bodies as unspiritual altars subject to all worldly disordered pleasures, with no boundaries or limits and to moan and groan against the Teachings of God. St Paul says: *You have been granted the privilege not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for His sake* (Phil 1:29).

ROAD TO HELL

Millions of Christians foolishly gamble with eternal Life, by satisfying the most minimum of bodily cravings with no self-control. Worthless indulgences will be seen by us as truly worthless, when we are made accountable for our bodies, souls and minds on the Day of Judgement. Christians who willingly reject Christ, who cannot *forgive trespasses against them*, pay a terrible price, which Satan uses to buy their souls for all eternity. The cost of our discipleship is spent united with the Cross. Let us learn to value our souls. It is our responsibility to say when tempted to sin; *Get behind me Satan* and not let the devil lead our lives. Peter became a changed man and embraced the Crucifix, eventually dying on one, hanging upside down. For those who use their bodies as temples to worship God, Jesus says today that *He will reward each one according to his behaviour.* God bless, Fr. Brendan.