

GET BEHIND ME SATAN

In the Gospel today (Mark 8:27-35), Peter answered Jesus question regarding His identity with a profession of faith, when he declared; *You are the Christ*. However, we see later in the Gospel that Peter did not understand that the ‘Christ’, as the Messiah, was also referred to as ‘the Suffering Servant’ in the Old Testament. The Suffering Servant described by Isaiah was to endure rejection, affliction, and persecution, even though He had done no violence and there was no deceit in His mouth (Isaiah 53:9). The Servant's final outcome will be Him lifted up, and exalted’ [on a Cross] (Is 52:13). This outcome only comes through the suffering of the Servant (Is 52: 15). Like a lamb led to the slaughter (Is 53:7). Jesus Christ was sent on a salvific mission from God to save our souls, by bearing our sins which involved suffering, death and resurrection from the dead. His suffering becomes a divine currency that purchases souls for heaven. He purchases us with His life. Jesus refers to Himself as the *Son of Man*, because this title is used in the prophesy of Daniel (7:13-14) to describe a figure with authority, glory and sovereign power given to Him by God, who has come to save the world. Jesus explains that the path to enter heaven (as is ours), is through suffering, death and resurrection. Peter began to remonstrate (protest) and took Jesus aside to change His mind and in doing so was interfering with God’s Divine Plan for Salvation. This kind of protest against the divine will of God is exactly what Satan does. So it is no surprise that Jesus scolds Peter, who allowed his mind to be infiltrated by the devil’s influence. Jesus said: *Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God’s Way but man’s*. Satan was using Peter to try and direct Jesus’ path in life. Satan will never direct or go in front of Christ to lead Him, and so the command for Satan to get behind Him puts the devil in his place. We too, must never let Satan lead us. When we object to the teachings of the Church, then we are letting Satan lead us.

FAITH IS NOT AN A-LA-CARTE MENU OF CHOICES

St James, in today’s second reading (2:14-18), talks about counterfeit faith. He says that if good works or deeds do not go with our faith, then our faith is *quite dead*. For example, if a Catholic voted “Yes” for Pro-Choice that leads to abortion, then they have blatantly opposed the teachings of Jesus Christ, who is Life. If we think it is okay to abort a living embryo in the womb, by denying this child a chance to have a life, then this is not a good deed, but a sinful selfish deed. Our faith must express itself in *works of love* (Gal 5:6). Jesus is reminding us that we are all placed on this earth to sit the exam of faith. If we pass then we will qualify to live in heaven someday. However, if we fail then hell is the other option. The Gospel has all the answers to this spiritual exam. Let us not be fooled by the teachings and philosophies of this passing world, but begin to take the teachings of Jesus more seriously. It is literally a matter of (eternal) life or (eternal) death and the choice is ours to make now. To love one’s enemy (Lk 6:27-38) and to forgive, are also forms of *losing one’s life*. Our refusal to forgive those who trespass against us comes from our false sense of the substantial self. If I think my life belongs to me, then I will cling to resentment, anger, and pride, when my dignity has been compromised. But when I realise that my life does not belong to me, but belongs to God, then I can truly put my forgiveness of others into practice, by doing it in relation to God’s forgiveness of me. When we replace our own mind-set with the mind-set of Christ, then we lose our old life but find a new one in Christ. Not to love and forgive is to deny ourselves eternal life. God bless, Fr. Brendan.