

SEPTEMBER 16, 2018

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 [IS 50:5-9A](#)

Responsorial Psalm [PS 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9](#)

R. (9) I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

Reading 2 [JAS 2:14-18](#)

Gospel [MK 8:27-35](#)

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. 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."

HOMILY:

In today's gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, must die at the hands of his opponents, but then will rise on the 3rd day. Peter, out of love for his friend, rebukes Jesus in this declaration. Jesus then responds, "Get behind me, Satan.

You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." He then summons the crowds and says to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." What does he mean by this? If Jesus takes up his cross, all-sufficient for our salvation, why must we take up our crosses as well? Fortunately, the artist that created the mosaics that are the stations of the cross in our church can offer an insight to this question. We'll look at four of the stations, numbers 2, 3, 7, & 9.

At station #2, "Jesus is made to bear his cross," we see the figure of a soldier dressed in blue-green, placing the cross of Jesus on shoulders of the kneeling Jesus. Immediately, **at station #3, "Jesus falls the first time."** In this, we see the how heavy is the burden of all humanity through all of history. Yet, in his steadfast love, he gets back up, so anxious in love is he to get to Calvary for our salvation. **At station #7, "Jesus falls the second time,"** see more clearly how heavy is this burden, so much so that the artist shows Jesus laid even lower to the ground." But, out of perfect love, he rises again, headed for station 13. The crux of the matter, and the clarification of what it means for us to bear our crosses, appears **at station #9, "Jesus falls for the third time."** The artist places Jesus even lower to the ground, suggesting he is near human exhaustion, but his divine will remains strong and we know he will finish his journey to Calvary, but at this juncture, the artist has something to tell us about what it means to carry our crosses.

There, we see Jesus laid low, while the same figure that gave him the cross back at station 2 (for it is our sins that have crucified Christ)



attempts to lift up Jesus to keep him on his way, even while the soldier now shoulders the cross. His instinct to place the cross on his shoulders while Jesus' recovers from this third fall suggests that, as St. Paul said in his letter to the Colossians, we need to make up for what is lacking in the suffering of Christ for the sake of His Body the Church (Colossians 1:24). What could be lacking in the suffering of Christ? His one, all sufficient cross needs to be carried to others who need that salvation! Station IX echoes the words of the gospel: we too must pick up our cross and follow after Jesus. It is HIS cross, be he needs us to bear that love to others and extend his salvation, though all times and to all places, through the sacrifices of our hands.

Down through history, followers of Jesus have picked up the cross of Jesus and, in sacrificial love to others, have continued the saving love of Christ's cross for others and the world. Where do you need to pick up that cross? While Jesus' saving humanity might

seem limited to Jerusalem 2000 years ago, because in baptism we have become "the body of Christ," we bear his saving love by picking up Jesus' cross and carrying it, with his Spirit, to those in need of love and hope. Where can you love others by following Christ's command to "take up your cross and follow after him?" Our lives must not be about being served, but becoming servants and slaves of others, loving them for their sake. Let us come to the Crucified One, let us receive the very flesh that was given on the cross and was raised in radiance for our life. And then, let us bear that life, by following along Jesus' way of the cross in sacrificial love of others. For His way of the cross is our way as well—the way to the fullness of life—through us to others.