

Homily: 22nd Sunday Year A

My dear people of Immaculate Heart of Mary, we are told by Jesus in our Gospel reading to take up our cross and follow Him. Are you willing to obey His command? Will you say yes to Him or do you want to do your own thing?

Some years back there was a commercial television advertisement by one of the "new generation" churches. "COME TO OUR CHURCH". "As soon as you step into our Church, all your problems will cease to exist." I asked myself, "What are they advertising? Was it a religion, the Christian religion, or rather a commercial product, an analgesic like Tylenol?" (Take two Tylenol tablets, and your headache will go away.)

My dear friends that was not how Jesus advertised Christianity. Our Gospel reading today tells us how Jesus taught Christianity to His followers and the people of His time: "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 will find it." The "Cross" is not chicken marsala, nor a hamburger. The Cross is suffering and pain.

It follows that the cross and suffering is part and parcel of the Christian religion. A cross – less Christianity does not exist; it has not yet been invented. If it were possible to be a Christian without carrying the cross, Jesus would most certainly have shown us how. Rather He Himself carried His own cross all the way to Calvary to show us what He meant. He drank the cup of suffering to the dregs, and invited His followers to take up their own crosses and follow Him on that same road - the road that led to His resurrection and glorification. The same road will lead us to our own resurrection and glorification with Jesus. Any other road will not lead us there.

Friends, we Christians should not be looking for a cross - less Christianity. If we find something that has no cross, it is not Christianity. We should leave it alone and run as far away we can. We will not find Jesus there. We cannot find Jesus anywhere without His cross. Telling us anything to the contrary cannot be of Christ. He or she cannot be preaching Christianity. He or she must be selling some other commercial commodity not Christianity.

