

**Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**September 3, 2017**

Andy Warhol once said that everybody is famous for fifteen minutes. However, we see in today's Gospel that this isn't necessarily true. Because it seems that Peter's fame lasts only about fifteen seconds.

The Gospel readings from last week and this week are so connected that it might be helpful to go back and do a quick review of what has gone before.

Last week Peter achieved his fifteen seconds of fame by correctly identifying Jesus as "The Messiah, the Son of the Living God." And then Jesus responded by saying, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

Well, at this point, Peter must have been feeling pretty good about himself.

And so when Jesus then told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly and be killed, Peter probably thought he had every right to tell Jesus that his death would be a big mistake.

But sadly for Peter the good feeling he had fifteen seconds ago evaporated when Jesus responded to Peter's protest by using the strongest words ever addressed to his disciples: "Get behind me Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

Poor Peter! He was only trying to be helpful and reasonable by trying to save the life of his friend, leader, mentor and Messiah! Peter reacted the same way any of us would if we were there.

And if we're honest, we have to admit that it's pretty hard to think like God. But, thankfully, there are times, like Peter did last week, that we get glimpses of new insights about some aspect of our faith or our lives that once was confusing or difficult to accept.

So, if we're to try and understand the way God thinks, we have to ask some questions. How does all this work? Why the cross? How does suffering lead to redemption?

Is Jesus telling us that suffering and pain are good in themselves and that we should flog ourselves for five minutes every day? No, that would be a distortion of God's intention. But we need to know that in suffering there is something deeply mysterious, valuable and redemptive.

That means that sometimes doing the will of God is hard and at some point we'll probably incur some degree of suffering. It means that sometimes following the example and teaching of Jesus is a real challenge.

It means that doing the right thing and loving our neighbor can be downright dangerous. It means that loving always demands sacrifice.

For example, if you're a parent, you've denied yourself a thousand times over and have tried to do the will of God by raising a family with countless personal sacrifices that so that your kids could have advantages that you didn't have.

Or maybe you have endured the cross that comes from supporting a family member or friend in his or her struggle with an addiction. You have put up with the cycle of victory and defeats, ups and downs because of the command of Jesus to love.

Or maybe you're a teenager and you're determined to live a life of virtue and chastity when it seems to you that no one else is. And you think you may have to pay a price for that.

And your cross will be to sacrifice popularity or to be rejected by the crowd that calls themselves cool.

In contrast to last Sunday, today's Gospel is about the cross, not about worldly power. It's about losing, not gaining. It's about subtraction, not addition. It's about less, not more.

Jesus' conviction is clear: We cannot be transformed if we're focused on and holding onto all the things the spirit of this world wants us to believe is important — the spirit Jesus refers to as Satan.

Jesus himself refused any titles of glory or majesty. Instead, he asked only one thing: To follow him by seeing the world as he sees the world.

To follow him in refusing to make wealth, selfishness and power the ultimate meaning of life; to follow him in dying to our own egos so that through our sacrifices, we can become all that God has created us to be.