

# Scripture Study

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



## **Opening prayer**

Jeremiah 20:7-9

(Ps 62:2-6, 8-9)

Romans 12:1-2

**Matthew 16:21-27**

## **Overview of the Gospel:**

- Last Sunday we heard about Peter's profession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus' designation of Peter as the rock upon which he will build his Church (verse 18).
- Jesus immediately follows this with the first of three predictions he will make of his Passion, death and Resurrection (verse 21. See also Matthew 17:22 and 20:17-19).
- Peter, taking his newly defined pre-eminence to heart, proceeds to forcefully contest with Jesus' in an attempt to deter him from his stated path. In response, Jesus likens Peter's attempts to Satan's efforts to tempt him away from his mission (see Matthew 4:1-11)!
- Jesus makes clear that, not only is it necessary for him to embrace his Cross to fulfill what the Father sent him to do, but it is the call of the disciple to take up his own cross everyday and follow Jesus (Mt 10:38-39; Luke 14:27; John 12:24-25; Romans 8:17). The cross in that time and place was a well-known instrument of torture and death, and no further details or explanation was needed!
- Jesus concludes by connecting one's faithfulness in bearing their own cross, to their eternal reward (verses 25-27. See also Matthew 25:31-46; 1 John 2:28; Romans 2:6-8; Revelation 22:12).

## **Questions:**

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading, what are some of the sacrifices, great and small, that Jeremiah must make in being God's prophet? What are some of the sacrifices we make (or may be called to make) in serving the Lord?
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, what does St. Paul mean when he refers to a "spiritual sacrifice"? How does he advise we offer these to God?
- In light of last week's Gospel, why does Jesus change the direction of his teaching now?
- What kind of Messiah was Peter expecting? Why was Jesus' response to Peter so strong?
- Putting yourself in the disciple's time and place, what would your reaction be to Jesus' statement of verse 21 (see 1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-25)? What is comparable today?
- What does it mean to "deny" one's self? To take up your cross? To follow Jesus?
- What earthly possession or lifestyle is worth exchanging for eternal life with God (verse 26)?
- What have I given up to follow Jesus—today and everyday?
- What picture comes to mind when you think of how Jesus "will repay everyone according to his conduct" (verse 27. See also Matthew 25:31-46)?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 540, 607, 618, 736, 1021**

## **Closing prayer**

*You shall as his true disciple, follow him, and with your good will, without grudge, do as he did and take your cross of pain upon your back, and die for the truth with him, and thereby reign with him, crowned in eternal glory. –St. Thomas More, martyr, in a letter to his daughter*

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"

**Scripture:** *Matthew 16:21-27*

*From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men." Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done.*

**Meditation:** What is the most important investment you can make with your life? Jesus



poses some probing questions to challenge our assumptions about what is most profitable and worthwhile. In every decision of life we are making ourselves a certain kind of person. The kind of person we are, our character, determines to a large extent the kind of future we will face and live. It is possible that some can gain all the things they set their heart on, only to wake up suddenly and discover that they missed the most important things of all. Of what value are material things if they don't help you gain what truly lasts in eternity. Neither money nor possessions can buy heaven, mend a broken heart, or cheer a lonely person. Jesus asks the question: *What will a person give in exchange for his life?* Everything we have is an out-right gift from God. We owe him everything, including our very lives. It's

possible to give God our money, but not ourselves, or to give him lip-service, but not our hearts. A true disciple of Jesus gladly gives up all that he or she has in exchange for an unending life of joy and happiness with God. God gives without measure. The joy he offers no sadness or loss can diminish. The cross of Christ leads to victory and freedom from sin and death. What is the *cross* which Jesus Christ commands me to take up each day? When my will *crosses* with his will, then his will must be done. Are you ready to lose all for Jesus Christ in order to gain all with Jesus Christ?

*"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all that I have and possess. You have given them to me; to you, O Lord, I restore them; all things are yours, dispose of them according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this is enough for me." (Prayer of Ignatius of Loyola, 1491-1556)*

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