

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A – 2020

We continue today with the message of the cross from last Sunday's gospel. I guess many of us here have a cross with you – different kinds of cross: the cross from the rosary, the cross we see from the crucifix there above the altar – plastic cross, wooden cross, golden cross from your necklace, from your earrings... Nowadays, there are people who pierce and wear a cross on their lips, their noses, their eyelids...

Those are crosses we can see and touch. But there are invisible crosses that we cannot see, cannot touch, but they are very heavy to carry. Jesus talks about those invisible crosses: the cross of hardship, suffering, hatred, division, gossip, prejudice, criticism which sometimes people create for us to carry, or we sometimes create those crosses for others to carry.

Remember from last Sunday's gospel, Simon Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Because of this confession, Jesus makes Peter "Solid Rock" as his name means; on this Rock, Jesus builds his Church. But not too long after the confession, Peter – the rock – becomes a stumbling stone, as today's gospel tells us. Peter cannot imagine the divine Messiah will suffer and be killed. Thus, he takes Jesus aside and dares to rebuke the Master...

Nonetheless, Jesus sees in Peter a similar voice of the devil's temptation in the desert – the voice of Satan has tempted Jesus to use his power to avoid suffering. That's why Jesus strongly warns Peter: "get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (*Mt. 16:23*)

Normally, people fear difficulty, suffering, and death... It is the same way of saying: people fear the cross. We see that fear, even from a great prophet like Jeremiah, in the first reading.

He was called to witness to the Lord, to speak against violence and outrage. In turn, he became "an object of laughter" and everyone mocked him. He feared. He intended to run away from this challenging ministry. But the Lord kept him and made him strong "like fire burning" in his heart.

As you probably have known, we are trying to finish up the renovation work at St. Mary Church. We think we are doing good work for people and for the parish, but in return we receive complaint, objection, reproach, mockery, criticism... Like Jeremiah, I feel a heavy load pressing on my shoulders; the cross seems too heavy to carry. Sometimes I am tempted to give up, but then in my prayer, the voice of Jesus encourages me: "My grace is sufficient for you" (*2 Cor 12:9*).

Jesus' example in today's gospel gives me more strength to keep walking with him. He makes it very clear: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (*Mt. 16:24*). Jesus knows that he has to face suffering and death, but he is faithful to God till the end. He sets that example for the disciples and for us today.

In the same way, St. Paul reminds us in the second reading today: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect [to God]" (*Rom 12:2*).

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

We all know the cross of hardship, suffering, criticism, division, or hatred is heavy to bear. We don't want others to create that cross for us to carry, so we should not create that heavy cross for others.

However, if we have to face hardship or suffering in this life Jesus encourages us not to give up, but to be faithful to carry the cross and follow him. Being disciples of Christ means denying ourselves, taking up our daily cross and walk with him. For us who believe, cross is no

longer a burden but a great promise as Jesus said: “whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever wishes to lose his life for my sake will find it” (*Mt. 16:25*).

MASS INTENTIONS

(from Sunday, August 30 to Saturday, September 5)

Sunday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Agnes M. Nguyen (death anniversary)
Monday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Cecilia De Rutte (birthday)
Tuesday	No Mass
Wednesday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Norma Magat (death anniversary)
Thursday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Daphne Massucco (birthday)
1st Friday	8 a.m.	SC ...	pray for our parishioners - <u>Adoration after Mass to Noon</u>
Saturday	8 a.m.	SC ...	pray for Mamita Emiliana Taaca (healing)