

OT XXII (A), Homily, August 30, 2020

Jeremiah 20: 7-9; Psalm 63 (My soul thirsts for you, O Lord my God); Romans 12: 1-2;
Matthew 16: 21-27.

Today's Gospel passage reminds us that Christian discipleship demands self-control ("Deny yourself"), the willingness to suffer ("take up your cross"), the readiness to follow Jesus by obeying his commandment of love, and generosity in surrendering our lives to God ("to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God" (Romans 12:1).

Today's readings explain how we should practice true, dynamic Christian discipleship. Jeremiah, in the first reading, is certainly a prototype of the suffering Christ. In the Responsorial Psalm, the Psalmist manifests his profound trust in God, just as Jeremiah himself does. In the second reading, Paul advises the Romans and us (Rom 12:1-2): to "offer our bodies as a living sacrifice" to God by explicitly rejecting the ungodly behavior of the world around us and by discerning and doing the will of God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus takes his disciples by surprise when, after Peter's great confession of Faith, Jesus announces that he "must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." After correcting Peter's protest, Jesus announces the three conditions of Christian discipleship: "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me."

Messages: 1. True disciples of Christ are having six characteristics: a) truly compassionate: they are willing to visit and help the infected and the sick in hospitals, the incontinent elderly, the handicapped and those who suffer dementia in nursing homes, and patients in hospices; b) truly humble: they are able to see that every good gift comes from God alone, and that His gifts to us of time, personal talents, and resources should inspire gratitude, not pride;

c) truly patient: they are committed to working with challenging children, adolescents with problems, young adults who are struggling with their Faith, and with those suffering dementia; d) truly forgiving: they are willing to forgive not just once, or twice, but again and again, because they know that God has forgiven them several times; e) truly loving: they willingly visit people in prisons, in retirement homes, and in homeless shelters; and f) truly faithful: they are living out a committed, trusting relationship with God, with spouse, with family and friends.

2. We need to ask these questions as we examine our conscience. A true disciple examines his or her conscience every day, asking three questions about discipleship:

a) Did I sacrifice a part of my time, talents and income for my parish and the missionary activities of the Church? b) Did I practice self-control over my thoughts, words, deeds and use of mass media? c) Did I train my children in my Faith in a loving, providing and redeeming God.

Please remember that you are first teachers of your children in their ways of faith and you are the best of teachers (Rite of Baptism).
