

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish **Bulletin for Teens**



Take up your cross and follow me

Sunday the 30th of August 2026, Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27.



Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord,' he said. 'This must not happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mind, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will

a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflecting on the Gospel

Imagine your best friend pulls you aside and says "I need to tell you something. Doing the right thing is about to cost me my life." What would your gut reaction be? It would probably be something like "No. That can't happen. There has to be another way." That's what Peter says to Jesus.

Just a few verses earlier, Peter has boldly declared that Jesus is the Messiah. Right after that high point, Jesus tells the disciples something hard. He is heading to Jerusalem where He will suffer at the hands of the religious leaders and be killed, and on the third day, He will rise again. Peter can't handle it. He pulls Jesus aside and essentially tells Him that is not going to happen to you! He's not trying to be difficult. He loves Jesus and is trying to protect Him. Jesus's response is startling. "Get behind me Satan!" He tells Peter. Peter is thinking the way people think, not the way God thinks.

Peter isn't a villain. His instinct is to avoid pain, to protect the person he loves, to find an easier way. All of this is completely human. Most of us would say the same thing in his place. But that human instinct is exactly what Jesus is calling out. The temptation to skip suffering entirely, to build a life around comfort and safety above everything else, to take the easy way, is an old temptation. It is the same temptation that Satan offered Jesus

In the desert; to take the easy road and skip the cost. When Peter insists the cross and death will never happen to Jesus, he's unintentionally offering that same shortcut. But without the cross and Jesus' death, the resurrection cannot happen, and we could not be saved.

Jesus isn't rejecting Peter. He's rejecting the idea that the cross can be avoided if you just love someone enough, or want it badly enough, or plan carefully enough. Things worth doing, things worth gaining, cost you something. Real love, real faith, real growth, almost always do.

Jesus offers all of us an invitation, not just Peter. We are invited to come after Him even though this means denying yourself, picking up whatever your cross is, and following Him, not as a once off decision, but continually.

When Jesus said 'renounce yourself', which is sometimes translated as 'deny yourself', He didn't mean to think of yourself as worthless or hating who you are. He meant not letting every feeling, impulse, or fear be the final word on what you do. We live in a world that says your wants and feelings are the ultimate authority, that protecting your image matters most and that we should always do what feels right to us in the moment. Jesus offers something different. He offers a life built around something bigger than our own comfort.

When Jesus said 'Take up your cross' He is asking you to carry the cross that is in your life right now. It might be a difficult family situation, a friendship that is falling apart, anxiety that you keep fighting, a temptation that you're tired of losing to or something else that you are struggling with. Everyone's cross is different and they may change throughout our lives. We are all invited to carry our crosses with Christ instead of resenting it or running from it.

Following Jesus isn't a decision you make once. It's a yess that you say again every day, especially on the days it's not easy or popular.

Think about

- ♦ Where in your life do you act like Peter, trying to talk God out of something hard instead of trusting Him with it?
- ♦ What does 'carrying your cross' look like for you right now?
- ♦ What would it look like this week if you chose Christ's way of thinking over the world's, in one real decision?

A prayer for this week

Lord Jesus,

Sometimes my life feels difficult, and the cross I carry can feel too heavy. Give me courage when I am struggling, strength when I am tired, and faith when I am unsure of the way forward.

Help me remember that I do not carry my cross alone. Walk beside me, guide me, and help me to trust You.

Amen.

