

When Jesus came, many Jews expected the Messiah to free Israel from the occupation and oppression of Rome, and to restore the kingdom of David as prophesied in the Scriptures. But Christ reveals a different kind of Messiah.

Christ reveals that the Messiah will not ONLY be a King descended from David, but ALSO, that He will be the suffering servant that Isaiah predicts in today's First Reading. The Jews of the time did not connect these suffering servant prophecies with the Messiah.

The suffering servant says, "I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting." These are Christ's own words.

Also, the words of today's Psalm are Christ's own words, where He gives thanks that God has freed His soul from death. This psalm is a clear prediction of Christ's resurrection.

Jesus asks, who do YOU say that I am? Peter makes his famous "confession" of faith, saying, "You are the Christ." All people are called to make his confession their own, because Christ asks all people, "Who do you say that I am?" But even though Peter believes Him to be the Messiah, He doesn't understand what this means.

After Jesus reveals that the Messiah will suffer and be killed, Peter rebukes Jesus because loves Jesus deeply. He misunderstands the mission of the Messiah. Peter wants a Messiah... without suffering, a Savior... without sacrifice, a Christ... without a cross.

A saint once said, if you have a vision of Christ, and He does NOT have his wounds, RUN! Meaning that this would not be Christ, but an imposter.

Another reason Peter rebukes Jesus is because he doesn't want to suffer and be killed with Jesus!

Jesus in return rebukes Peter, saying, "Get behind me Satan." Satan here is using Peter as a mouthpiece to tempt Jesus. Satan's goal was to tempt Jesus to be a Messiah of popularity and success, a Christ without the Cross. But Jesus doesn't give in to this temptation. He tells Peter to GET BEHIND Him and FOLLOW Him. Then Jesus says those shocking words: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it." [PAUSE]

What does he mean by deny yourself? It means much more than occasionally

saying no to your desires. The term for “deny” was actually a legal term that meant “disown”. To deny yourself is to disown yourself, to give your whole self, your whole life, to Christ. Or as Christ puts it, to deny yourself is to lose your life for His sake, in order to save it.

To deny yourself means to give let Christ set the agenda for your life, for your family, for your children; for your job; for your free time; to give him your checkbook, your agenda, your everything.

Someone once said, “If Christ ain’t Lord of ALL, then He ain’t Lord AT all” in other words, “If Christ ain’t Lord of ALL of your life, then He ain’t Lord AT all in your life!”

At the Fall Family Days at the Octagon Barn yesterday, a lady told me how she used to make buttons that said “100% Catholic”. She told me it is not easy to live 100% Catholic, and I agreed. This reminded me of today’s Gospel. While letting Christ set the agenda for our lives is not always easy and sometimes very challenging, it will lead to true happiness in this life and in the next. Not worldly happiness, but true, deep down peace, the peace Christ gives.

So, to sum up, Jesus is saying, “If anyone wishes to follow me, you must be willing to disown yourself, and surrender your life to me. You must be willing to deny your own desires, if they go against... MY desires. To deny your own plans, if they go against... MY plans. Your own will, if they go against... MY will. You must be willing to take up your cross and publicly show others your faith in me, even if they ridicule you for it. For whoever wishes to save their life, and set the agenda for their life, will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake, and lets me set the agenda for their life, will save it for eternal life.”

Today and everyday, He invites us to surrender our lives to Him.

- Announce youth group, FOOD FAITH SONG day, Reconciliation on Saturdays