



Homily – 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Timeⁱ

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the Gospel we have just heard, we find that St. Peter once again this week, is the center of attention.

In last week's Gospel, we remember, St. Peter was kind of the hero. He was the one who realized that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus called Peter the rock upon which he would build his holy Catholic Church.

But in the Gospel we have just heard, Jesus is not calling Peter the rock. Instead, he is calling him a "stumbling block," an obstacle. He even calls him "Satan!"

What happened? What did Peter do to make Jesus so upset?

As we just heard, Jesus was explaining to his disciples what it really means to be the Messiah. He said it means that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer and be killed.

Now, Peter loves Jesus and he has a sincere faith. It is only natural that he doesn't want Jesus to have to suffer or die.

And we know from the Gospels that Peter has a very impulsive and passionate personality. So he kind of grabs Jesus and tries to stop him. He insists: "No! God forbid that should ever happen."

But Peter isn't thinking right. He's thinking in human terms. He's not thinking in terms of God's will or God's purposes.

Jesus sees Peter's words as a temptation, basically. That's why Jesus calls Peter, "Satan." Because Satan is the tempter, the one who always tries to get in the way of God's plans. Peter's words are a temptation for Jesus to reject the mission that God gave him. They are a temptation to save himself from the suffering of the cross.ⁱⁱ

My brothers and sisters, there are basically two ways we can look at the world, two ways we can live. We can live by human logic — with the mentality of this world. That

is the way that Peter was thinking in today's Gospel. To this way of thinking, the suffering of the cross is a scandal.

But our Lord in today's Gospel challenge St. Peter — and each one of us — to think, not as the world thinks, but as God does.

In the second reading for today's Mass, St. Paul says: Do not conform yourselves to the mentality of this world! But instead, allow yourselves to be transformed by the mercies of God.

We have to always be seeking to know *God's will*. We have to always be seeking to conform *our will* to *his will*.

God's will for us is simple, my brothers and sisters. And it is beautiful.

He wants each one of us to be holy, to become a saint. He wants us to live like Jesus and to live for the sake of his Gospel.

Jesus Christ calls us today to make *his cross* the pattern for our Christian lives. He calls us to deny ourselves, to take up *our cross*, and to follow him.

This is not an option, my brothers and sisters. This is what it means to be Christians. We are called to imitate the love that Jesus Christ showed in giving his life for us on the cross.

You and I, we do not find our own personal cross in Jerusalem. We find our own cross right here — in the midst of our daily lives.

Our cross is not made out of wood. Our cross is the duty that we have to live our Christian life wherever God places us — in our homes, in our work, in our communities, in our public life as citizens.

Our cross is all the little sacrifices that we make, all the hidden acts of kindness that we do for the love of God and for the love of our brothers and sisters. Our cross is all the sufferings and hardships that we embrace for the sake of his Gospel.

This is God's will for us! And what a simple and beautiful program for our lives!

Every day we have many opportunities to do something beautiful to serve God. To make our lives an offering to God. To give ourselves freely in true love and service to others.

This isn't always easy. We all know that.

There are some people in our lives who are difficult to love, aren't there? And it's not always easy for us to be patient with people, even for the sake of Jesus.

There are situations we encounter that make it a challenge for us to stay true to Jesus and to our Christian values. Sometimes trying to do God's will brings suffering into our lives.

That's what the first reading for today's Mass is about. The prophet Jeremiah is treated badly because he is proclaiming God's Word. He is tempted to just stop, to stay quiet. He says, "I will not mention God's name anymore."

We can understand what Jeremiah is talking about. We live in a culture where there are many pressures to keep our religious faith private, to keep our beliefs to ourselves — especially when it comes to living our Catholic beliefs and values in our public life.

But the prophet Jeremiah could not stay silent. And neither can we, my brothers and sisters. Jeremiah said his heart was on fire to speak about the love of God. That's how we should feel also.

So this week, let us try to make little sacrifices in our lives, to deny ourselves more, as Jesus asks us. Let us try to embrace the crosses in our lives with a greater attitude of acceptance of God's will.

As we commit ourselves more and more to carrying the cross of Christ in our daily lives, we will discover that he is molding us into the persons we were meant to be.

We are going to encounter hardships and sufferings. That's just how it is. These are a part of our human condition. But we are called to accept these challenges with love. We can "offer up" our difficulties and sufferings to God, out of compassion for others who are suffering also.

Following God's call is not easy, but it will be rewarded. Jesus promises us that at the end of today's Gospel. If we take up our cross and follow behind him as he carries his cross, we will find, at the end of our journey, the Resurrection and eternal life.

We must pray always for direction in our lives to discern God's will for us and for the strength to make the right decisions in pursuing our eternal destiny.

So let us ask Our Blessed Mother for help. She walked with Jesus on his way of the cross. May she help us to carry our cross and to follow her Son more faithfully, and to know, in all our joys and struggles, that we are on our way to the Resurrection.

ⁱ Readings: Jer. 20:7–9; Ps. 63:2–6, 8–9; Rom. 12:1–2; Matt. 16:21–27.

ⁱⁱ Matt. 27:42.