

Sermon

- ◆ **First Reading:** *Jeremiah 20:7-9*
- ◆ **Second Reading:** *Romans 12:1-2*
- ◆ **Gospel:** *Matthew 16:21-27*

He said to them **IF ANYONE WANTS TO BE A FOLLOWER OF MINE, LET HIM RENOUNCE HIMSELF, 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”

GOSH! That’s asking a lot! What is this cross that each of us must carry in order to reach our eternal salvation? Carry on and read the following “whoever desires to imitate God the Redeemer, Our Lord Jesus Christ, must humbly, without murmuring, take upon his/her shoulders the cross of suffering, whether that suffering be interior or exterior, merited or unmerited.

There are many people who desire to be witnesses of the Saviour in times of peace, that is to say, provided that all goes well in pursuing their desires. They wish to become saints, but without toil, without weariness, without difficulties, without cost to themselves. They have the ambition to know God, to taste and feel God, as long as there is no unpleasantness.

But if they must labour, if they experience any bitterness, any desolation, any darkness or strong temptations, or if God seems hidden and they experience no consolation, their good resolutions vanish. These are not the true witnesses whom the Saviour seeks.

Who does not wish to enjoy peace everywhere and in everything he/she does? It is from striving that a true, durable and sure peace comes. All that we look for outside of this is an illusion.

If, on the other hand, we apply ourselves with all our strength to maintaining joy in the midst of sadness, peace in the midst of agitation, simplicity in the midst of multiplicity, and cheerfulness in the midst of vexation, then we will be true witnesses of God and of Our Lord Jesus Christ”

When would you say the above was written? 10 years ago perhaps? or maybe 50 years ago? It was written over 600 years ago by a Dominican called John Tauler(1300 – 1361) ; read it again if you like, or have it handy when a trial comes your way! What sort of trial? It’s that cross you have to carry, the one that sometimes drags you down, such as, the exams you failed, or that bout of bad health that seems to go on and on, or the best friend you lost because of a misunderstanding, or that sick child you brought into the world who needs your constant attention, or that regular attack of migraine when stress comes your way, or that obnoxious boss who makes life hell for everyone at work and seems to enjoy it!! or that well organized pilgrimage to Lourdes that turned out to be a nightmare with some of the pilgrims at each other’s throats over disparaging remarks they made about each other, “....and as for that priest with the high pitched voice who thinks he can sing! HELP! “ the list of crosses is never ending, others refer to them as “the crosses of life”, but don’t we all have to deal with these crosses whether we have Faith or not?

So what makes the cross(s) of believers any different from what non-believers also “have-to-carry”?? interesting!! As believers, with the gift of Faith that has been given to us, we have freely chosen to join our pains and sufferings to the Cross of Christ, why do we do that? because we realize that we cannot “go-it-alone” on the precarious road of life, we choose to pray for strength to continue in what seems to be an uphill struggle a lot of the time with little or no respite for many of us ;

In the midst of all our crosses, pains and woes we still choose to follow the Saviour, as the saying goes, “to the bitter end” ; but “THE BITTER END” is the gateway to Heaven....

Then there’s the other alternative, bail out! Give up! Don’t bother anymore, forget about that cross, pretend it doesn’t exist! Go your separate way and deal with things your way, “...after all!, everyone else seems to be having a great time !!” (a shocking ILLUSION!!!)

“ I’m free to make my own decisions as regards my so-called “crosses”!!!, Indeed you are! Suit yourself!! Will we be hearing from you again???....

What type of cross are you carrying presently? Do you offer it up to the lord-of-Life and ask for spiritual strength to see you thru’ another step of the way? In the midst of this Pandemic, many are now carrying the cross of uncertainty “will I be able to feed my family for the winter?”, “what if I get that dreaded redundancy letter?”, there’s no easy way to carry our individual crosses ; As believers, we must join our cross, whatever form it takes, to the Cross of the Saviour, the One who was crucified ; ASK for the strength you need, then ask again, don’t give up ; “ASK and YOU WILL RECEIVE” ; And of course pray for those who have no Faith but still have a cross to carry, may our intercessions be of help to them.....

.....stay healthy.....best wishes,

Fr Kieran A. Fitzharris SVD