

Homily of Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2020

A young man was at the end of his road, seeing no way out, he dropped to his knees in prayer. “Lord, I can’t go on,” he said. “I have too heavy a cross to bear.” The Lord replied, “My son, if you can’t bear its weight, just place your cross inside this room. Then, open that other door and pick out any cross you wish.” The man was filled with relief and did as he was told. Before he opened the other door, an angel of the Lord moved the cross he had dropped to the other room.

Upon entering the room, he saw many crosses; some so large. Then, he spotted a tiny cross leaning against a far wall. “I’d like that one, Lord,” he whispered. The Lord replied, “My son, that is the cross you just brought in.”

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it.”

Our crosses are our afflictions, difficulties, trials, temptations, responsibilities, and keeping God’s commandments. In the first reading, Prophet Jeremiah’s crosses were his responsibility to prophesy to his people, the rejection, humiliation, and persecution he suffered in the hands of his people. In his frustration he wanted to stop prophesying. He said, “I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more.” However, Jeremiah continued to prophesy to his people amid the rejection, humiliation, and persecution. Jeremiah leaves us a good example to follow.

In the Gospel, Jesus spoke about his cross, “[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.” Peter put pressure on Jesus to refuse his cross. “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” Peter became an obstacle to God’s plan for Jesus. Jesus rebuked Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me.” Jesus teaches us not to refuse or abandon our crosses. He says, “Take up your cross, and follow me.” The encounter between Jesus and Peter reveals to us the pressure we go through which at times make us refuse our crosses or make us abandon our crosses. The pressures, sometimes, come from those very close to us. We need to be watchful.

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18, “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” This is to say that God manifests his power in our crosses. Just as the event of the crucifixion of Jesus on the Cross concluded with the resurrection of Jesus from the grave; we believe that carrying our crosses and following Jesus bring us resurrection and glory.

The second reading further reveals to us the transformative power of the cross. If we truly take up our crosses and follow Jesus, we will no longer conform to this age, we will be spiritually renewed, and we will be able to do the will of God. We will be able to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Here is another story. God, according to his divine plan, gave a man a tall cross to carry and told him, “While on your journey, pray for anything, and I will give you.” He set off on his journey. After a few miles he cried to God, “Lord, it is too heavy, please cut it down a little.” God threw a saw to him to cut the cross to the size he wanted. He was delighted and so continued his journey. After a few more miles, he cried to God again, “Lord, please cut it down a little more, I will be able to carry it better.” God threw a saw to him to cut the cross a little more according to his wish. He was glad. After a few more miles, he got to a gully. The easiest way he would have crossed over the gully would have been to place the cross across the gully and use the cross as a bridge. Unfortunately, the cross was, now, too short. Remember that God made him a promise, “While on your journey, pray for anything, and I will give you.” He did not pray for anything useful. Rather, his desire to have an easy journey ruined his journey. James 4:3 says, “You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”

Let us take our crosses and follow Jesus. Through carrying our crosses, we will experience God’s power. Through carrying our crosses, we will experience resurrection and glory. Through carrying our crosses, we are pleasing to God. Through our crosses, God’s plan comes to fulfillment for us. Amen.

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