

Sunday September 12th, 2021  
**24th Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Parishioner Reflection**

*By: Jonathan Tucker*

Today's gospel passage is Mark 8:27-35.

The account is noteworthy for a couple of reasons. First, because Peter acknowledged his belief that Jesus was the Christ; the Messiah that Israel had been waiting for. And second, for the prediction that Jesus would be rejected, crucified, and rise from the dead all of which would occur within the following six months. This was the first time in Jesus' ministry that these events were foretold; all of which seems incomprehensible to his followers at the time.

For many the Messiah would appear as a political leader come to free them from the power and subjugation of Rome. This was a commonly held belief of the day but was mere speculation and wishful thinking. It was not until then that Jesus confirmed to his Apostles that he was their Messiah. Mark captured Jesus' predictions; that he would have to endure rejection and crucifixion. He also drew reader's attention to manner in which Jesus addressed his future to his disciples; He spoke this openly. Jesus would be conquered and humiliated by his enemies, but their victory would be short-lived. It may at first appear that Jesus' opponents had succeeded in killing him. But he would prevail and return to life three days later; at least that was his prediction.

To the Apostles the likelihood of this outcome seemed impossible. Ridiculous even. And Peter had little hesitation telling Jesus that, as only he could. Afterall, they had watched him perform so many miracles already. Clearly God was with him. So, how could anyone prevail against the Christ? Old Testament prophesies, like the Suffering Servant part of which formed the first reading in Isaiah 50, were the farthest thing from their minds according to Mark. Jesus' mention of resurrection, which would prove that it was he and not his enemies who prevailed, fell on deaf ears. The idea of a resurrection of that kind must have seemed ludicrous and inconceivable.

Jesus' message was barely grasped by his followers at the time. He repeated this message again as recorded in Mk. 9 and 10, to prepare them for his suffering and the scandal that would follow shortly. While it did not fully prepare them for events that would follow, it did help to strengthen their faith once facts convinced them of Jesus' resurrection. It was then that they realized that Jesus was more than Messiah, that he was in fact the Son of God, who with knowledge and forethought freely accepted rejection, humiliation and a shameful execution for their sakes and ours. Only then would they give their lives for the sake of this news of God's great love. Instead of being associated with scandal, the cross became an emblem of God's love for humanity.

We, today, are blessed to view the work of Christ through the lens of history. We have come to know – and sadly sometimes even take for granted – just how much God loves us. We understand the humiliation that the incarnation brought on his beloved Son and the sufferings and cruel death which the sins of the world, including our own, brought on the Son of God. All of this took place because God wished to make us his adopted sons and daughters, inheritors of full and eternal life. But acknowledgement or appreciation is not enough. Atonement has been made for our sins, but we also have a part to play in working out our own salvation. As the second reading from James 2 reminds us; faith of itself, if it does not have works (or fruit), is dead.

Today's gospel account serves to inform our response as Jesus' followers today. It reminds me that my journey, as a follower of Jesus, also involves personal sacrifice. That the crosses of life are to be borne and recognized as God's means of keeping me close to him.

The world is your ship and not your home (St. Therese of Lisieux)