

AUGUST 30, 2020
Sunday of the 22nd Week in OT
Matthew 16: 21-27

“THE CROSS, THE SIGN OF JESUS’ LOVE.”

“There was a couple who went to shop in a beautiful antique store. Seeing an exceptional teacup, they asked ‘May we see that?’ As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke, ‘I have not always been a teacup. There was a time when I was just a lump of red clay. My master took me and rolled me, pounded and patted me and I yelled out, ‘Don’t do that. Let me alone,’ but he only smiled, and gently said; ‘Not yet!’ Then, Wham! I was placed on a spinning wheel and suddenly I was spun around and around. ‘Stop it! I’m getting so dizzy! I’m going to be sick!’ But the master only nodded and said, quietly, ‘Not yet.’ He spun me and poked and prodded and bent me out of shape and then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I yelled and knocked and pounded at the door. ‘Help! Get me out of here!’ ‘When I thought I couldn’t bear it another minute, the door opened. He carefully took me out and put me on the shelf, and I began to cool. Oh, that felt so good! But after I cooled, he picked me up and he brushed and painted me all over. The fumes were horrible. ‘Oh, please; Stop it!’ I cried. He only shook his head and said: ‘Not yet!’ Then suddenly he put me back into the oven. It was twice as hot, and I thought I would suffocate. I begged. I pleaded. I was convinced I would never make it. Just then the door opened, and he took me out and again placed me on the shelf, where I cooled and wondered ‘What’s he going to do to me next?’ An hour later he handed me a mirror and said, ‘Look at yourself, you’re beautiful.’ God knows what He is doing for each of us. He is the potter, and we are His clay. He will mould us and make us and expose us to just enough pressures of just the right kinds to give us the opportunity to become the disciples He wants us to be.”¹

¹ www.frtommylane.com

My brothers and sisters, sacrifices, and even suffering can lead us in appreciating the value of our goals and aspirations. Look at the athletes who trained themselves to be the best and beat the world records. Medical students, engineering students or any students for that matter, who really study hard, skip parties, and spend a sleepless night to get the best grade. My brothers and sisters, we can overcome any suffering through patience, understanding, faith and love, and when we are in love, we sacrifice our lives for the person/s whom we love. Jesus Christ gave us the supreme example of that love which we are invited to follow. We cannot have Jesus without the cross. Only in love, by love and with love, we can understand pain and suffering. When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He gave us the true meaning of love: to die for one's friend. According to Pope John Paul II: "Jesus' suffering is 'substitutive suffering,' suffering instead of us, it is redemptive. Jesus has given us the answer to the question about the meaning of suffering not only by His teaching but above all by His suffering. In the Passion of Jesus something new has been added to our understanding of suffering, 'it has been linked to love'. Therefore, each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ."²

Why we complain if this suffering and pain we are experiencing is a participation on Jesus' suffering, of course much less compare to Him which He suffered not because of His own sins but for our sins. My brothers and sisters, Jesus is asking us to devote our lives in totally loving and serving others even if, at times, this involves disagreement, scorn, ridicule, suffering, pain and even death itself. To follow Him means to love and to be instruments of love in and out of season, in happiness and sadness, in joy and pain all throughout our lives. We cannot have our Lord Jesus Christ and live sinful lives at the same time. St. Paul reminded us in our Second Reading: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this

² ibid

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”³ And Jesus in the gospel: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”⁴ As disciples of Jesus, our crosses are our means of salvation, and with Him and with His love, we can endure everything.

My brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves: Am I ready lose all for Jesus in order to gain all for Jesus? Am I willing to accept pain and suffering because of Love for Jesus that I need to follow? Let us always remember that a true disciple of Jesus will always ready and gladly gives up all that he or she has for the sake of the Kingdom, the unending life of happiness with God.

Let this be our prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, your love is enough for me. Help me to see that love in times of pain and suffering, problems and disappointments and be with me always to guide and lead me along the way of the cross. I can carry the crosses of my life because You are at my side and helping me to carry it. Give me strength to follow you and deny myself everyday. Amen.”

³ Rom 12: 1-2 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

⁴ Matthew 16: 24-25 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA