



# Living the Gospel



Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time — June 20, 2010

**Theme: “My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord; I know them, and they follow me.”**

## Gathering Prayer

**All:** Father, guide and protector of your people, grant us an unflinching respect for your name, and keep us always in your love. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Exploring the Word

### **Gospel Reading: Luke 9:18-24**

<sup>18</sup> Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" <sup>19</sup> They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" <sup>20</sup> Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Messiah of God." <sup>21</sup> He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone. <sup>22</sup> He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised."

<sup>23</sup> Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

<sup>24</sup> For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

## Gospel Notes

**20.** "Christ" means "anointed" and is a name indicating honor and office. In the Old Law *priests* were anointed (Ex 29:7 and 40:13), as were *kings* (1 Sam 9:16), because God laid down that they should receive anointing in view of their position; there was also a custom to anoint *prophets* (1 Sam 16:13) because they were interpreters and intermediaries of God. "When Jesus Christ our Savior came into the world, he assumed the position and obligations of the 3 offices of priest, king and prophet and was therefore called Christ" (*St Pius V Catechism*, I, 3, 7)

**22.** Jesus prophesied his passion and death in order to help his disciples believe in him. It also showed that he was freely accepting these sufferings he would undergo. "Christ did not seek to be glorified: he chose to come without glory in order to undergo suffering; and you, who have been born without glory, do you wish to be glorified? The route you must take is the one Christ took. This means recognizing him and it means imitating him both in his ignominy and in his good repute; thus you will glory in the Cross, which was his path to glory. That was what Paul did, and therefore he gloried in saying, 'Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal 6:14)" (St Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii sec. Lucam, in loc.*).

**23.** "Christ is saying this again, to us, whispering it in our ears: the cross *each day*. As St Jerome puts it: Not only in time of persecution or when we have the chance of martyrdom, but in all circumstances, in everything we do or think, in everything we say, let us deny what we used to be and let us confess what we now are, reborn as we have been in Christ' (*Espistola* 121, 3) [...]. Do you see? The *daily* cross. No day without a cross; not a single day in which we are not to carry the cross of the Lord, in which we are not to accept his yoke" (Bl. J. Escriva, *Christ is passing by*, 58 and 176). "There is no doubt about it: a person who loves pleasure, who seeks comfort, who flies from anything that might spell

suffering, who is over-anxious, who complains, who blames and who becomes impatient at little thing which does not go his way-a person like that is a Christian only in name; he is only a dishonor to his religion, for Jesus Christ has said so: Anyone who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross every day of his life, and follow me" (St John Mary Vianney, *Selected Sermons*, Ash Wednesday).

The Cross should be present not only in the life of every Christian but also at the crossroads of the world: "How beautiful are those crosses on the summits of high mountains, and crowning great monuments, and on the pinnacles of cathedrals...! But the Cross must also be inserted in the very heart of the world.

"Jesus wants to be raised on high, there in the noise of factories and workshops, in the silence of libraries, in the loud clamor of the streets, in the stillness of the fields, in the intimacy of the family, in crowded gatherings, in stadiums.... Whenever there is a Christian striving to lead an honorable life, he should, with his love, set up the Cross of Christ, who attracts all things to himself" (Bl Escriva, *The Way of the Cross*, XI, 3).

## **Gospel Reflection**

Anyone involved with youth (parents, youth ministers, teachers, counselors) knows that the question of identity is paramount for them. They are trying to find out who they are in terms of talents, potential careers choices and how they relate to others. All these are positive steps in their maturing process during which they identify their strengths and weaknesses, consider their assets, and bond with others who help them in this sometimes painful process. When ask about who they are, virtually no one would answer in terms of pain, suffering, death. In this Sunday's gospel Jesus asks his disciples about his identity. They reply with good answers that they have heard from others, part of the Jewish psyche of the time about the Messiah.

Jesus asks again a pretty simple question about his identity. Now Peter answers, but a surprise lies in how Jesus clarifies

the meaning of "the Christ." He is to "suffer greatly," "be rejected," "be killed." This is the way Jesus becomes who he really is-the risen One. To realize our own truest identity, we must daily die to ourselves. This is the way we become who we truly are to be-followers of Jesus who daily die to ourselves and daily share more and more in the life of the risen Lord.

Jesus is so much in touch with his ultimate *mission*-to "suffer greatly," "be rejected," "be killed," and "be raised"-that he actually defines his identity in terms of it. His mission is an extension of who Jesus is-Savior. We usually think of Jesus' mission as teaching and preaching, healing and working miracles, and so it was. But underlying these activities is the ultimate one-his suffering, death and resurrection. So it is with us.

Through baptism we share in Jesus identity and mission-we plunged into the waters of baptism, dying to self and rising to new life in Christ and thus are made members of the body of Christ. Our own identity and mission is that of Jesus: to die to self so that we are raised to new life. Following Jesus has its cost. The statement in the gospel is true: we save our lives by losing them. We know this is true because Jesus showed us the way.

## **Living the Paschal Mystery**

The first reading from the prophet Zechariah mentions "a fountain to purify from sin and uncleanness." As Christians we naturally think of the baptismal font that purifies and cleanses us. Two points might be made.

First, these waters of baptism don't flow just once. The ritual is an action that aptly describes an ongoing sacramental reality in our lives: we are constantly being washed clean. One way to do this, of course, is through confessing our sins either in prayer itself or in sacramental confession. We sometimes forget, though, that good works also cleanse us of our sins! So, the denying self and carrying our daily cross

mentioned in the gospel are cleansing activities that lead us to forgiveness and new life.

Second, baptismal purification is also tied to our Christian identity. We not only are freed from sin but also are made members of Christ's Body. As such, we might expect that the same things that had happened to Jesus will also happen to us. To be practical, that means that when we live our baptismal promises we can expect to be misunderstood, ridiculed, shunned, etc. Paschal mystery living has its demands (dying to self) and rewards (new life). Self giving is always life-giving.

## **New and Old Testament links**

### **First Reading — Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1**

<sup>10</sup> I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and petition; and they shall look on him whom they have thrust through, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and they shall grieve over him as one grieves over a first-born. <sup>11</sup> On that day the mourning in Jerusalem shall be as great as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ... <sup>13:1</sup> On that day there shall be open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain to purify from sin and uncleanness.

### **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9**

<sup>2</sup> O God, you are my God-- for you I long! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts, Like a land parched, lifeless, and without water. <sup>3</sup> So I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory. <sup>4</sup> For your love is better than life; my lips offer you worship!

<sup>5</sup> I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands, calling on your name. <sup>6</sup> My soul shall savor the rich banquet of praise, with joyous lips my mouth shall honor you! ...

<sup>8</sup> That you indeed are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy. <sup>9</sup> My soul clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me.

## Second Reading — Galatians 3:26-29

<sup>26</sup> For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

## Catechism of the Catholic Church

**575.** Many of Jesus' deeds and words constituted a "sign of contradiction", (*Lk* 2:34) but more so for the religious authorities in Jerusalem, whom the Gospel according to John often calls simply "the Jews", (Cf. *Jn* 1:19; 2:18; 5:10; 7:13; 9:22; 18:12; 19:38; 20:19) than for the ordinary People of God. (*Jn* 7:48-49.) To be sure, Christ's relations with the Pharisees were not exclusively polemical. Some Pharisees warn him of the danger he was courting; (Cf. *Lk* 13:31.) Jesus praises some of them, like the scribe of Mark 12:34, and dines several times at their homes. (Cf. *Lk* 7:36; 14:1.) Jesus endorses some of the teachings imparted by this religious elite of God's people: the resurrection of the dead, (Cf. *Mt* 22:23-34; *Lk* 20:39.) certain forms of piety (almsgiving, fasting and prayer), (Cf. *Mt* 6:18.) the custom of addressing God as Father, and the centrality of the commandment to love God and neighbor. (Cf. *Mk* 12:28-34.)

**596.** The religious authorities in Jerusalem were not unanimous about what stance to take towards Jesus. (Cf. *Jn* 9:16; *Jn* 10:19.) The Pharisees threatened to excommunicate his followers. (Cf. *Jn* 9:22.) To those who feared that "everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation", the high priest Caiaphas replied by prophesying: "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." (*Jn* 11:48-50.) The Sanhedrin, having declared Jesus deserving of death as a blasphemer but having lost the right to put anyone to death, hands him over to the Romans, accusing him of political revolt, a charge that puts him in the

same category as Barabbas who had been accused of sedition. (Cf. *Mt* 26:66; *Jn* 18:31; *Lk* 23:2, 19.) The chief priests also threatened Pilate politically so that he would condemn Jesus to death. (Cf. *Jn* 19:12, 15, 21.)

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. How would you answer Jesus' question, "Who do the people say that I am?"
2. How would you personally and comprehensively answer the question, "Who do you say that I am?"
3. What areas of life, or particulars of life, come to your mind when you hear Jesus' statement, "let him deny himself and take up his cross?"
4. How does the challenge and the promise of verses 23-24 make you feel?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Gracious God, you strengthen those who call to you in need: hear these prayers that one day we might enjoy everlasting life with you. We ask this through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen

## **Preview and decide if you want to!:**

The Bible can be complex, compelling and challenging. Understanding how the collection of people, proceedings and places fit together can be a daunting task for most of us. The Holy Cross Bible Ministry invites you to a preview of *'The GREAT Adventure - A journey through the Bible'* - an 8 week program that covers Salvation History from its beginning in Genesis, through the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Church. **Come join us** as we study this immensely rich story and delve into the 14 narrative books of the Bible - a story that promises to both fascinate the young novice yet challenge the Bible study veteran.

**Preview** : 7:45 - 9:30 pm, Monday 21st June, 2010,  
St Michael's Room

**Saturday 10am – 12nn at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)**

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**Emmaus Journey – [www.emmausjourney.org](http://www.emmausjourney.org)**