



FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL GROUP CATECHESIS

13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A

SUNDAY GOSPEL

Giving Fully our Whole Self

Matthew 10:37-42

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: “Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me.

“Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes a holy man



because he is a holy man will have a holy man's reward.

“If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little

ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.” ■

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Fr Aloysius Rego OCD



Jesus shatters any illusions we may have that following him will bring us worldly contentment. On the contrary, he tells

us forthrightly that discipleship may bring conflict.

Authentic following of Jesus will necessarily result in a radical re-orientation of our relationships. It

involves prioritising relationship with Jesus – which can result in the relativising of other relationships, “Anyone who prefers father, mother, son, or daughter to me is not worthy of me.”

Jesus himself lived by what he asks of us. He found himself misunderstood and in conflict with his own family; and his own townspeople rejected him. Yet, nothing could deter Jesus from fidelity to his God-given mission.

The cross that Jesus speaks about is the daily dying to self involved

in following him and serving God. This cross is not the sufferings we choose for ourselves, or even the little inconveniences that are part of life; but the contradiction of our will in order to do God's will.

As fallen beings, we tend to seek self, not God. Even when we seek God, it can be in order to bolster self. The cross is a putting to death that which we prefer, no matter how virtuous or sensible it may seem, in order to walk the way of Jesus and to serve as Jesus asks us. ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS



This week we hear Pope Francis' reflection on the Feast of Saints Peter & Paul which we celebrated on 29 June.

From the earliest times, the Church of Rome has honoured the Apostles, Peter and Paul, in a single feast on the same day, 29 June. Faith in Jesus Christ made them brothers and their martyrdom has made them one. St Peter and St Paul, so different from each other on a human level, were personally chosen by the Lord Jesus and they answered the call by offering their entire life. In both of them, the grace of Christ accomplished great things. It transformed them, and how! Simon denied Jesus in a dramatic moment of the Passion; Saul harshly persecuted the Christians. But they both welcomed God's

love and allowed themselves to be transformed by his mercy; they thus became friends and apostles of Christ. This is why they continue to speak to the Church and still today they show us the way to salvation. And should we perchance fall into the most serious sins and the darkest of nights, God is always capable of transforming us too, the way he transformed Peter and Paul; transforming the heart and forgiving us for everything, thus transforming the darkness of our sin into a dawn of light. God is like this: he transforms us, he always forgives us, as he did with Peter and as he did with Paul.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles shows many aspects of their testimony. Peter, for example, teaches us to watch over the poor with the eyes of faith and to give them the most precious thing we have: the power of Jesus' name. He

did this with that paralysed man: he gave him all he had, that is, Jesus (cf. Acts 3:4-6).

Three times the episode is told of Paul's call on the road to Damascus, which signals the turning point in his life, clearly marking a before and an after. Before, Paul was a bitter enemy of the Church. Afterwards, he placed his entire existence at the service of the gospel. Also for us, the encounter with the Word of Christ is capable of completely transforming our life. It is impossible to hear this Word and remain unmoved, remain stuck in our old habits. It pushes us to overcome the selfishness in our hearts to resolutely follow that Teacher who gave his life for his friends. But it is he who with his Word changes us; it is he who transforms us; it is he who forgives us everything, if we open our heart and ask for forgiveness. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. This is a stark gospel, hitting us with the hard but unavoidable question, is God the highest priority in my life? Is God number one? Am I number one? Others? Do I put the will and desires of myself and others before what God is asking me to do? Discuss.
2. Fr Aloysius Rego reminds us powerfully that the cross we are all called to take up as followers of Christ means "putting to death that which we prefer – no matter how virtuous or sensible it may seem – in order to walk the way of Jesus". What do I need to put to death at this point in my life?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for Each Other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

Response: *Holy Spirit come transform us, fill us with a new outpouring of your love and mercy.*

Reflect: Pope Francis reminds us of the great transformation that the Holy Spirit achieved in the lives of both St Peter and St Paul. Spend some time reflecting on how God is willing you to die to your own desires in order to embrace grace and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Closing Prayer: Lord we love you. We desire to truly be your servants. Help us this week to be alert to your voice in the movement of the Holy Spirit, and be filled with the desire and courage to respond to your will in our lives. Amen.

