



## YEAR A – 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time - JUNE 28, 2020

The first reading today is taken from the second book of Kings in chapter 4. The prophet Elisha was the successor of Elijah in the office of prophet in Israel. His ministry lasted 60 years in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. It was during his ministry that the worship of Baal was eradicated. In this reading we hear how Elisha helped a woman in need after she showed him the kindness of hospitality. Their story has a happy ending but not every story does.

The responsorial psalm today is a different story. Many psalms begin with complaint and end with joy and praise. But this psalm (89) begins with God's favors and ends with the cross of grievance. The psalm was written at a time when the house of David was in real danger, much like our country today. Some think it was penned in the time of the Babylonian Captivity. That was a time of slavery for the people of God and a heavy cross for them to bear. Some people felt abandoned by God.

600 years later, Jesus says in today's Gospel, "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me." Taking up our cross and following Jesus is not easy. It's hard for a young woman to pick up her cross and follow Jesus after being abused and rejected by someone she deeply loved. It's hard for an old man to pick up his cross and follow Jesus after he has been placed in a nursing home. It's hard for a wife to pick up her cross and follow Jesus when her husband spends his nights away from her and their children. It's hard for a young man to pick up his cross and follow Jesus after a drunk driver has doomed him to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. These are just a few examples. Most of them are from our parish.

That raises an important question. Why is it that some people can carry their cross and follow Jesus without complaint while others cannot? Victor Frankl addresses that question in his best-selling book, "Man's Search for Meaning". It's a book worth reading. Frankl was a prisoner in a German concentration camp in the second world war. He witnessed and experienced man's inhumanity to man and saw how it changed some prisoners into animals and others into saints. Frankl says the deciding difference was faith. Their faith put them in touch with a power that helped them maintain their humanity even in the face of brutal inhumanity.

In addition to their strong faith in God, they also knew how to love others as Jesus does. In 56 years as a priest, I have seen people suffer in many different ways. Those who claim to have faith but have no love, seem to be self-centered, selfish folks who expect others to wait on them hand and foot. Perhaps you know someone like that. Those who have love but no faith can be self-less people, but they suffer needlessly too. Their search for meaning is without success. Without faith, there is no hope and without hope, the cross gets harder to bear because it has no meaning.

People who have transcendent faith, transcendent hope and transcendent love, know that it is possible to do what Jesus asks us to do. Jesus says, "Take up your cross and follow me." He does not say, "Get someone else to take up your cross." We need the love of Jesus (both objective and genitive) to do that. We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience (Teilhard Chardin). This is not the last dimension of our (spiritual) lives, and it may not be the first.

When you find the meaning of your cross here on earth, you will know why you were born.