

**24th Sunday in Ordinary “Time
Cycle B
September 12, 2021**

1st Reading: **Isaiah 50:4c – 9a.**

God is my help.

Psalm: **116:1 – 2,3 – 4,5 – 6,8 – 9.**

I will walk before God, in the land of the living.

2nd Reading: **James 2:14 – 18.**

Faith and works cannot be separated.

Gospel: **Mark 8:27 – 35.**

God’s way is not humankind’s way.

God is good, All the time; All the time, God is good.

Friends we are now beginning the 24th week of Ordinary Time and the creators of our lectionary have certainly put together 3 readings that challenge us as “followers of the Christ.” I think without intending Dag Hammarskjold, who headed up the UN in the 60’s, summed up our lessons well when he stated: “The burden you carry will only become lighter when you’re carrying someone else’s.”

We began with our first reading from the mid-section of Isaiah, known as the “suffering servant” section, in which the prophet describes the anointed one, the one who save God’s people, as one who willing accepts ridicule and shame for the sake of those whom he is sent to serve. Thus, giving the suffering people of Israel who are in exile and servitude with the hope filled message that “God is our help!” Followed by a Psalm response that builds on that thought.

James then clearly reminds us of that belief in and following Jesus is more than just believing. There can be no distinction between Faith and Works. What I, what we, think, say, and do does matter; just ask Peter. This is the year we focus on Mark’s Gospel, the shortest of all 4; and is focused on Jesus’ journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. In Mark’s gospel

we have 3 mentions of the suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection that Jesus will endure. The first is today, the next is next week, and the last, and then in 5 more weeks we get the last prediction. All three have the same pattern: 1) a teaching, 2) a misunderstanding or misinterpretation, and 3) a correction on the part of Jesus. This last point is the reason for the secrecy request. It's always important for us to remember, as Fr. Ken would often remind us, the Gospels are not history. They were written for a specific early Christian community; and we become the beneficiaries of these writings.

So, what does Peter teach us today? He, the "Rock", gets the right answer; and of course, is feeling pretty good about it. Then Jesus gives the teaching about what he, as the anointed one, must undergo; and Peter instead of following Jesus (which he was called to do, and accepted) jumps in front and says, "are you crazy, there is no way we will allow that to happen!" Jesus interrupts him and calls the "rock" a "stumbling block" (interpretation of "Satan"). We learn here that sometimes it is a good thing to step on back and reassess where we are going. I am reminded of the quote I read on the board at the YMCA this week: "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." It's the most often quoted phrase in Neal Donald Walsch's book series *Conversations with God*.

Jesus then gives us the correction, not only must he willingly suffer, but those who choose to follow him must pick up their crosses as well. This is a new way of thinking, God's way not humankind's. The cross transforms from a sign of torture to one of victory, of love not hate. It reminds us of what James says, what we think, say, and do does make a difference and this is a great reflection as we head into the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

God is good. All the time. All the time. God is good.