

Faith without works is “dead.”

(By Faith Catholic’s ‘Faithful Servant’)

1st Reading: Is 50:5-9a

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2nd Reading: Jas 2:14-18

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Gospel: Mk 8:27-35

GROW: I think it can be easy to romanticize faith: the post-retreat high, the inspirational homily, even the motivational wall art that pops up on Pinterest. But *keeping* the faith can be hard sometimes. And living it out? Even harder. Today’s readings both challenge and encourage us, as they so often do. The Letter of James pulls no punches: Faith without works is “dead.” And in today’s Gospel, right after Peter says, “You are the Christ,” Jesus tempers that Good News, telling him that even the Son of Man must suffer greatly. We who follow Jesus must also be willing to take up our cross. This is a daily challenge to choose life over death; to choose the transformative power of Jesus over sin that creeps into our lives; to make the choice to put others’ needs before our own. None of this is easy. But as the prophet Isaiah reminds us, we don’t have to do it alone; indeed, the Lord God is our help. We can choose well.

GO: As we listen to today’s readings, wherever we may be in life and faith, what stands out? Is it James’ entreaty to pair faith with works? Or Jesus’ words that “whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it”? Or the prophet Isaiah’s rock-solid faith? Today’s readings give us many ways to witness to our faith in Jesus – through prayer, service, generosity, perseverance, works, and words. We can ask the Holy Spirit to show us which of these gifts we can share with others this week.

ACTIONS: Brainstorm new ways to witness to your faith. It could be as simple as picking up extra food for those in need or connecting over the phone with someone who may need some inspiration.

Prayer

O Lord, by all your dealings with us,
whether of joy or pain, of light or darkness,
let us be brought to you.
Let us value no treatment of your grace
simply because it makes us happy
or because it makes us sad,
or because it gives or denies us what we want.

But may all that you send us bring us to you,
that knowing your perfectness
we may be sure in every disappointment
that you are still loving us,
and in every darkness that you are still enlightening us,
and in every enforced idleness
that you are still using us,
yes in every death,
that you are giving us life. **Amen.**