

## 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

### GOSPEL

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Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord;' he said 'this must not happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?'

'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

(Matthew 16:21-27)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- This text marks the beginning of the fourth major section of Matthew's Gospel, which follows Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and death.
- The word *Satan* originally meant 'adversary' or 'accuser'. Later it came to mean personified evil. Here Jesus uses it figuratively of Peter, who does not yet understand the meaning of Jesus' mission.
- The name Peter comes from the Latin word for 'rock'. In last week's gospel, Jesus named Peter as the rock on which the Church would be built. In this week's gospel, that rock has become a stumbling block in Jesus' path!

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This gospel contains the first of three predictions of his passion and death that Jesus makes along his journey to Jerusalem. Matthew tells the story of that journey across the next four chapters of his gospel.

Peter is highly disturbed by the predictions of Jesus' suffering, but is soundly rebuked. The contrast between this text and the gospel of the previous week is stark! In the immediately prior episode, Peter is praised and rewarded for his sublime affirmation of faith, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' In this text, Peter's lack of understanding, both of what that means and of Jesus' mission, causes him to be ridiculed as an obstacle to the divine mission.

While we may have some sympathy for Peter in wanting to spare Jesus the pain and suffering he predicts, what is at issue is Peter's failure to see that the cross is part of the plan and that discipleship will also involve the cross. Taking up the cross, however, will result in great reward and ultimate vindication when the time of judgment comes.

- What cross do you bear?
- How well or otherwise do you cope with this?
- Is the cross and the suffering of Christ an obstacle for you?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What are the obstacles to Christ in your path?
- Are they of your own making or blocks put in place by circumstances or other people?
- What crosses do you bear for the sake of Christ?
- Share a story of a cross you have had to bear. Did it change you? In what ways did you become a stronger person?
- Has there been a time when you chose to face hardship or pain rather than avoid it?
- Do you know others who are burdened by a cross at the moment? Try to lift a burden from someone this week.
- Throughout this week, recite a verse from today's psalm (62:8-9):

*My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God*

*For you have been my help;*

*In the shadow of your wings I rejoice.*

*My soul clings to you;*

*your right hand holds me fast.*

*My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God*

