

During this unprecedented time in our world's history, we offer you the following material for your praying and reflecting on God's Word.

Introduction - September 12, 2021

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks the disciples for a field report by asking what others are saying about him. He then turns the question directly to the disciples and asks what they believe. Peter speaks for all of them when he announces that they believe Jesus to be the Christ.

The word *Christ* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for Messiah, which means "the anointed one." At the time of Jesus, the image of the Messiah was laden with popular expectations, most of which looked for a political leader who would free the Jewish people from Roman occupation. Jesus does not appear to have used this term for himself. As we see in today's reading, Jesus refers to himself instead as the Son of Man, a term derived from the Jewish Scriptures, found in the Book of Daniel and in other apocryphal writings. Many scholars suggest that the phrase Son of Man is best understood to mean "human being."

Now that the disciples have acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, Jesus confides in them the outcome of his ministry: he will be rejected, must suffer and die, and will rise after three days. Peter rejects this prediction, and Jesus rebukes him severely. The image of Christ that Jesus is giving is not the image of the Messiah that Peter was expecting. Jesus then teaches the crowd and the disciples about the path of discipleship: To be Christ's disciple is to follow in the way of the cross.

The path that Jesus was inviting his disciples to share meant tremendous suffering and death. This is the kind of radical commitment and sacrifice that Jesus calls us to adopt for the sake of the Gospel.

Lectio Divina with the Sunday Gospel

Lectio Divina means 'divine reading'. It is a way to pray using the holy scriptures in a step-by-step process. Gather the entire family around and make the sign of the Cross. Light a candle.

Leader: "Holy Spirit, you inspired the authors of Sacred Scripture to write what you wanted us to know for the sake of our salvation. Inspire us now to hear those words not only with our ears, but our hearts, so that we might know your saving Word for us today."

- Have one person **read** the scripture slowly, out loud and have a few moments of silence afterwards. (It may be helpful for everyone to have a copy of the reading).
- **Read** the scripture again out loud and choose a single word or short phrase that touches, speaks or surprises you. Share with everyone.
- **Read** the scripture out loud one more time and discuss what is happening directly in the text.
- **Meditate** on what God is doing now in our lives through this text.
- **Respond** to what God is doing through prayer.
- **Contemplate** on what God is asking of me through this text and how to use these words as a gift for others through my actions.
- After a period of silence, end with the Sign of the Cross.

(see over)

The Holy Gospel for September 12, 2021

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi;
and on the way he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that I am?”

And they answered him,
“John the Baptist; and others, Elijah;
and still others, one of the Prophets.”
Jesus asked them,
“But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.”
And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him,
Then he began to teach them
that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering,
and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,
and be killed, and after three days rise again.

He said all this quite openly.
And Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him.
But turning and looking at this disciples,
he rebuked Peter and said,
“Get behind me, Satan!
For you are thinking not as God does,
but as humans do.”

Jesus called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them,
“Whoever wants to become my follower,
let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
For whoever wants to save their life will lose it,
and whoever loses their life for my sake,
and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

(see over)

Family Activities

- ❖ When you gather as a family, ask everyone this question - "Who are you?". Describe who you are in one or two word answers. Do your answers connect you as a person to Jesus and God? (i.e./ I am an adopted daughter of God.) Jesus is asking you "Who do you say I am?" What is your answer?

- ❖ Reflect on a time when something didn't turn out as expected. How did it make you feel? Peter did not expect Jesus to tell him that his life would end in pain, suffering and even death. Jesus told him that his disciples too would experience this. In what ways have you suffered being a disciple of Jesus? What encourages you to remain faithful to him in the midst of the suffering?

- ❖ Jesus knew that his suffering, death and resurrection were God's plan for our salvation. Jesus taught us that God's plan for us is far greater than we can know or expect. Do we sometimes forget to let God be God for us? What are ways we can help ourselves trust in God's plan for us?

- ❖ "Disciples must aim to lose their life so that we can live our lives through Jesus' Risen life." What does that statement mean to you?