

Baptism (1) The Follower of Jesus: The Cross/Baptism of Child/Prayer/ Homily.

The Gospel today tells us that Jesus is our Messiah, but He is a suffering Messiah. As we hear from the Gospel Peter got it wrong, and Jesus called him Satan. Get behind me Satan: he said. Peter would like a popular Messiah; one who would make no demands of him; one who didn't call for change in life, but Jesus tells him that the way he thinks is not God's way. In fact he tells Peter that the way he thinks is the same as Satan thinks. We all like a Messiah without suffering, but Jesus says that he is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be put to death. There is no doubt that our Saviour is a suffering Saviour. All we have to do is to look at the Cross.

This is why the Cross is the Christian Symbol and so Jesus says: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself, and take up his Cross and follow me". Many of us like the comfortable life; we don't like the suffering part of life. However suffering is part of life, and we must cope with it. The cross is part of life, and we cannot follow Christ without carrying our Cross for the follower of Christ is one who must change his way of living. And none of us like change in our lives. We fight against it. The follower of Christ is one who follows the will of the Father in heaven as revealed by Jesus. The follower of Christ can no longer follow his own will. Sometimes this is not easy. We are to follow the will of the Father in its entirety. We cannot pick the parts of the Gospel which appeal to us, and ignore the rest. We must take all or nothing. God is our creator. We are his creatures.

The will of God is not like a menu on the table, where we can pick and choose. The will of God is revealed in the Gospels and we are called to follow it in every aspect of life. Otherwise Jesus says we are not following it at all. As Jesus puts it today: "Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it". We are to give up our own ideas for the ideas of God; we are to give up our own mentality for the mentality of God; we are to give up our own wisdom for the wisdom of God; we are to give up our inherited views for the views of God. We are to put on the mind of Christ Jesus. There is no point in saying that God is wrong. He is not; he is God. So the Christian always asks what does Jesus say about this matter, not what do I think about it. This is what taking up the Cross daily means. It means following the will of God as expressed by Jesus. It means asking what does Jesus say, and following what he says.

We live in a world in which people like to choose for themselves. This is a good thing as long as we don't decide

how God should think. God's ways are not our ways, and if we don't accept this simple principle we end in great trouble, for Jesus then says: "Get behind me Satan". This is what he said to Peter. Now he says it to us.

There is one area in life in which this picking and choosing is taking place. The will of God is that if a child is to be baptised the parents should be practising Catholics, and their sponsors should be practising Catholics. This makes basic sense to anyone with what is called common sense, yet it is difficult to get this point across to people. In fact this reaction against God is one of the crises in parish life today. Some people know better than God even though the obvious truth is more obvious than the nose on our face. It is obvious that if parents don't go to Mass on Sunday their child will be the same. It is obvious that if Parents don't pray at home the child will come up without prayer, or the experience of prayer. It is obvious that if parents don't believe in the Mass by celebrating it on Sunday they shouldn't have a child baptised into a faith they don't believe in themselves.

This kind of thinking is not only illogical, but anyone who encourages it is colluding in something which is seriously sinful for it is an insult to God. We should let God be God and accept his will for we are his creatures, not his advisors. He must increase, and we must decrease if we are to follow his will. The Son of God went to Jerusalem, and there he suffered and died for us so much does God love. "Greater love than this no man has than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you".