

## Homily 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Year A 2023

Whatever happened in the Gospel today, Peter didn't go off in a huff or decide he had had enough. He remained; he stayed loyal even if he did not understand what had happened. He was able to admit to himself that he was wrong even though he didn't know why!

The challenge Jesus presents to us is taking up our cross and following him. Let's reflect on this.

The cross of Jesus wasn't just the one thrust upon him and carried to his horrendous death. He had been learning about his cross from the moment he was born and only really embraced it when he began his public ministry. Over three years, or so, he learned what it really meant. What is clear is that he accepted the cross because of his love for us, his love for everyone and because he wanted us to be fully happy – a happiness that he experienced with the Father, especially in his times of prayer with the Father. It was his love for the Father and his overriding desire to do what the Father asked of him that motivated him to do this. This is altruism of the highest order.

Taking up the cross of Christ means being altruistic. We do this for our love of Jesus Christ, for our love of the Father and for our love of the Holy Spirit. Taking up our cross leads us to realise that the only way that we can be happy is if others are happy too. The Gospels do not tell us how curing people, telling stories and instructing people in the love and goodness of God made Jesus feel. But, bringing out the love and goodness in people's lives must have brightened his own inner happiness and joy. Happiness and joy are only experienced when shared with others and the more the merrier. Yes, there will be suffering along the way and some of it will be terrible and debilitating. What helps us get through it, is knowing that we accept it for others and because Christ is always there to help carry us through. We will accept whatever suffering and pain comes along because of our love for others. Giving birth is one of the best examples of this.

**September is the month** during which we pray especially for creation and find ways to help it heal itself from all the abuse and damage we have done to it. We have forced it to carry our cross of suffering and pain. Some thoughts:

*The ancient Hebrews rightly stated that "The Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters." And the Spirit of God still moves over the waters—over, under, in, through and amidst the waters—as the Spirit moves and enlivens all of creation. They added that: "God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures!'" You can almost see them come, bubbling out of that precious liquid, the home of so much incredible, diverse, wonderful life.*

*What a wonderful, precious gift is the soil beneath our feet! And how good it is to know that ours is a God who loves and cares for the soil. "The land that you are crossing over to occupy," states Deuteronomy, "is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, a land that the Lord your God looks after. The eyes of the Lord are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." Let us hold the soil close to our hearts. May we learn to love and to care for the land, as our Creator loves and cares for it. And may we never forget to give thanks for this very precious gift.*

*Air is one of God's gifts that is most easily and most readily taken for granted. You take a breath hundreds of times a day. But do we give it a thought? The Old Testament says the breath of God was breathed into the nostrils of man and gave him life. According to the Old Testament everything that breathes, breathes by the Spirit of God. "When you send forth your Spirit (your breath), they are created" (Ps. 104) That our lungs are being sustained by God's breath that keep us alive is a pretty awesome and wonderful way of thinking about breathing. Joseph Sittler wrote: "Reason says that destroying clean air is impractical; faith ought to say it is blasphemous."*

**NASA was interviewing professionals to be sent to Mars. Only one could go, and he couldn't return to Earth.**

*The first applicant, an engineer, was asked how much he wanted to be paid for going. "A million pounds," he answered, "because I want to donate it to M.I.T."*

*The next applicant, a doctor, was asked the same question. He asked for two million pounds. "I want to give a million to my family", he explained, "and leave the other million for the advancement of medical research."*

*The last applicant was a politician. When asked how much money he wanted, he whispered in the interviewer's ear, "Three million pounds."*

*"Why so much more than the others?" the interviewer asked.*

*The politician replied, "If you give me £3 million, I'll give you £1 million, I'll keep £1 million, and we'll send the engineer."*