

Friday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mk 8:34-9,1): Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” He also said to them, “Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come in power.”

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me”

Fr. Joaquim FONT i Gassol
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Today’s Gospel speaks of two contemporary themes: the cross we all have to bear every day and its fruit, that is, Life with capital letters, supernatural and eternal.

When we listen to the Gospel we stand up as a sign we want to follow its teachings. Jesus tells us to deny ourselves, not to follow “the pleasure of our whims” —as the psalmist claims— or, as Saint Paul cites, to get rid of “the deceiving greed”. To take up our own cross is to accept the little mortifications we find every day along the way.

We can be helped out by what Jesus said in His priestly sermon at the cenacle: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more

fruit.” (Jn 15:1-2). A hopeful gardener pampering the grapes so they bear the best wine! Yes, we want to follow our Lord! Yes, we are conscious the Father wishes to help us so our branches bear an abundant fruit in our earthly life which we can later enjoy in the Eternal Life.

Saint Ignatius used to guide Saint Francis Xavier with the words of today's text: “What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Mk 8:36). This is how he got appointed the patron of Missions. With the same idea in our minds, we can read the last canon of the Canon Law Code (n. 1752): “(...) and the salvation of souls, which must always be the supreme law in the Church, is to be kept before one's eyes.” And Saint Augustine also has his famous lesson: “Animam salvasti, animam tuam praedestinasti”, which could be translated as: “He who dedicates himself with true zeal to the salvation of souls has thus good reasons to hope for eternal life.” The invitation is quite clear.

The Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, helps us to advance in this way.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"I am still a slave. But if I suffer, I shall be emancipated by Jesus Christ; and united to him, I shall rise to freedom." (Ignatius of Antioch)

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"The theological, spiritual and ascetic tradition, from the most ancient times, has maintained the need to follow Christ in the passion, not only as an imitation of his virtues, but also as a cooperation in the universal redemption" (St. John Paul II)

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"The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men" (1 Tim 2:5). But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men (Second Vatican Council). He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow (him)" (Mt 16:24) (...)." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 618)