

INTRODUCTION

Tell the group:
 Think about a time when you were told something that you didn't want to hear.
 What do you do when you have prepared a dinner for a close friend and the phone rings telling you that she/he cannot come.

Or perhaps you are excited to celebrate your town fiesta with a few selected guests, but there is the sudden news of lockdown in your area.

How do you respond?

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus telling his disciples something that they may not have wanted to hear. Let's listen to find out what Jesus said and how one of his disciples responded.

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

He 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."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ



OPENING PRAYER

Any appropriate Prayer or Song to the Holy Spirit

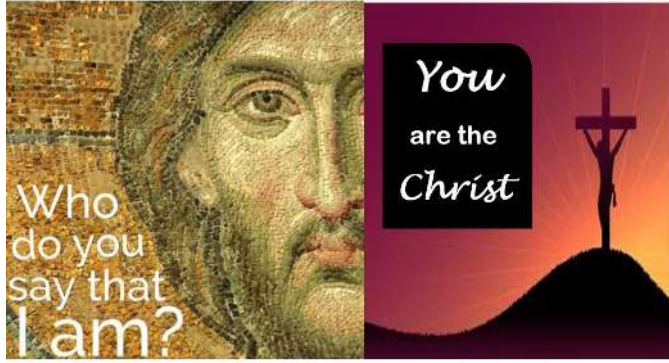


PHASE ONE
REMEMBER THE STORY OF JESUS

1.1 Proclamation of the Gospel Story Mk 8:27-35
Enthroned the Bible on a table with lighted candle)

A moment of prayerful silence
We will not be able to understand the Word of God unless God himself opens our hearts. Let us now welcome Jesus as he speaks to us through his Word

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
 R. Alleluia, alleluia.



A reading from the Gospel Mark (8:27-35)

Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

1.2 Brief Guided silent Meditation / Personal Prayer

What was the question Jesus ask his disciples?

1.3 Text in Context

Short background on the Gospel of Mark

Mark witnessed how the first Christians came together in their home in Jerusalem. Mark joined St. Paul and St. Barnabas on their first missionary journey to Antioch in 44 A.D, though at a certain point, he left them and returned to Jerusalem. But Paul mentioned him in his last years in prison as a useful servant to him (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark's Gospel was probably written between 60 and 70 A.D., and was based upon the teachings of St. Peter.

Among the Gospels, Mark has a particular attention to the Passion and suffering of Jesus predicting it as early as Chapter 8. In today's reading, Peter has a special place in his writing

1. What did Jesus ask his disciples at the beginning of today's Gospel? (He asked what people were saying about him.)
2. What did Peter answer when Jesus asked who the disciples thought he was? (Peter said that Jesus was the Christ.)
 Say: In saying this, Peter acknowledged that he believed that Jesus was sent by God to save his people. Peter must have certainly thought that this sounded like good news.
3. What else did Jesus tell his disciples ? (That he was going to suffer and die)
4. Who objected to what Jesus said? (Peter)
5. How did Jesus respond? (He told Peter that he did not understand and that he was not thinking like God.)
- 6 Then what did Jesus tell his disciples?
 (Jesus said that anyone who would want to be his disciple must follow his example by denying oneself and taking up one's cross.)



Christ Slowly Reveals Who He Is

Chapter 8 is where the Gospel reading of today is taken. It is at the middle part of the Gospel of Mark. We have seen in the previous chapters, how Mark presents Jesus as a man action in his work of preaching and healing. Jesus attracted people and disciples and formed among them the Twelve Apostles. Jesus's disciples must have reached a certain level of status quo, from Jesus' growing popularity. They recognized Jesus as a true teacher who spoke with authority. He was absolutely the man they were dreaming to lead them. They were full of expectations of what Jesus could be not only for them as his followers but for Israel as a nation.

By this time, Jesus knew that he was on the half-way of his mission. While being very much involved in people's miseries and hopes, Jesus knew very well who he is (his identity) and why he has come on earth (mission). It is high time for Jesus to make known himself in a deeper sense. Yes, the disciples had seen lots of his miracles beyond believing and heard his teaching far beyond the wisdom of great prophets who ever lived. But these are not sufficient enough to tell Jesus' real identity.

To focus on this important truth about himself, Jesus starts to talk about his true self while on the road through Caesarea Philippi. From that point of the journey, the disciples had to grow in their knowing deeply who Jesus is. He Jesus asked them: *Who do people say that I am?"*

Jesus Gives a Clear Picture of the Messiah

The disciples gave names associated to prophets namely: John the Baptist and Elijah. Jesus is not interested of what others say of him. Being a good teacher, he guides them to draw out from them their own understanding of him
"But [to you]who do you say that I am?"

Peter replied freely **"You are the Christ."**

In other words, Peter must have said,
You are the One who will save us. You are the Anointed whom we've been longing to come!

Christ in Greek is *Christos* and in Hebrew, *Messiah* which both mean the "Anointed". All Jews shared the common hope of the coming of the Messiah who would deliver them from Roman's captivity through human power.

In Bible times, those sent by God for the mission were anointed (with oil) in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and prophets The Jews believed that the Messiah would come to be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord.

Peter hit the right answer. But Jesus had to give then a clear picture of who he is as the Messiah: That he, himself,

- must suffer greatly
- and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,
- and be killed, and rise after three days.

At this time, Jesus knew very well his coming death. He would take upon himself the rejection and suffering of the prophets like in today's first reading from Isaiah (50:5-9a)

*I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;
my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. (Is:50:6).*

However, the apostles did not understand him even if he would repeat this to them three times (Mark, Chapter 8-10), ignoring he would rise again.

The Following of Jesus as the True Messiah

In great disagreement to Jesus. Peter perhaps said:
*No, we will not allow you to die in the hands of your enemies!
God forbids!*

Peter's answer reflects how our world thinks. Amid people suffering, we want a God who would punish the wicked and reward the good. We want a God who would get victory by defeating enemies through his strong arms. We refuse to

understand that God's chosen one would suffer and die. But this is not how God works!

How do we see the situation now in our family, community and country? Are there some issues that are disturbing? If Jesus would physically appear, what would you tell him or what question do you think he would ask you?

Jesus had to explain using this saying:

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

Jesus is what he believes. He died on the cross in loving obedience to the Father and love for us. There is no other way to bring us back to the Father except through his suffering and death on the cross. He offered himself for us to lead us to New life- the gift of his resurrection.

PHASE THREE RESPOND – with/ in my personal faith /community faith story

Christianity is born from Jesus' offering of his life.

On September 14, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross. The liturgy reminds us of the victory of life and love that Jesus speaks about in today's Gospel. We also commemorate the Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15. The Church confirms in many celebrations the joy of loving in the spirit of sacrifice as Christ has shown us. The Blessed Virgin Mary and many Saints have shown us the way to loving that passes through the Cross.

This is the mystery of our faith as Catholic Christians that we may want to deepen as Christ followers:

Are we committed to follow Christ to the Cross?

Who is Jesus to me now? What is my attitude towards difficulties that I experience in life? How do I respond to those who find life more difficult?



CLOSING PRAYER

Thanksgiving prayer for the grace of following Christ.

BACKGROUND FOR THE CATECHISTS

CFC 594 The Creedal *doctrine* on the Sufferings and Death of Christ proclaims central truths of our Christian Faith: God as redeeming Love, and Christ our Savior, responding to our sinful human condition. Christ, the Word-made-flesh, whose glory is that of the Father's only Son (*Jn 1:14*), never reveals the Father more intensely than when dying on the Cross, loving to the end, crying out "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (*Lk 23:46*). The glory of God shines through the Crucified Christ as nowhere else!

"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM. . . The One who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone." "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (*Jn 8:28; 12:32*).

CFC 596. By his Passion and Death Christ reached down into the deepest roots of human alienation — our separation from God, from ourselves, and from one another. The love of the crucified Christ becomes the norm, the source, the means, and the final goal of all Christian morality. Christ tells us: "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps" (*Mk 8:34*). For "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn 15:12*).

CCC 603 Jesus did not experience reprobation as if he himself had sinned. But in the redeeming love that always united him to the Father, he assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that he could say in our name from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Having thus established him in solidarity with us sinners, God "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all", so that we might be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son"

CFC- Catechism, for Filipino Catholics
CCC – Catechism of Catholic Church

