

**Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis  
Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sept. 15-16, 2018, Cycle B**

It really seems coincidental that just this past Friday, Sept. 14, we celebrated the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and Saturday, Sept. 15, we celebrated Our Lady of Sorrows. I say a coincidence, because this Sunday's scriptures would have us reflect on that whole mystery of Jesus being a suffering Messiah, and what being a suffering Messiah entails for our lives as Jesus' followers.

First of all, our first scripture reading comes from the Old Testament book of the Prophet Isaiah, the third of the four Suffering Servants Songs of Isaiah. This third "suffering servant song" we listen to every Palm Sunday as our First Reading, as we enter into Holy Week:

"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."

"The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint..."

And in our Gospel passage from Mark we hear Jesus put the blunt question to his own disciples, after listening to them rattle off what other people thought about him: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter, speaking for all the disciples, blurts out: "You are the Messiah." (In Greek: "Christ") But what did being the Messiah imply in the minds of the disciple. In the minds of many century Jews of Jesus' time – the Messiah was to appear as a victorious figure – with no hint of defeat or suffering. Jesus now corrects any false messianic impressions they may have. He tells them: "...the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed..."

Peter is quick to rebuke Jesus, because he knows if the Messiah is going to suffer, so will his followers. Jesus is just as quick to rebuke Peter back; he answers the same way he called James and John: "Follow me." (now translated as: "Get behind me, Satan") Jesus is telling Peter, you instead are listening to Satan, and thinking the way the world thinks – power, wealth, possessions, glory!

Then Jesus says what Peter just knew he was going to say: "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."

Jesus is saying that if we wish to follow him to eternal glory then we have to embrace the cross of self-giving, serving others, die to our selfishness, and renounce the desire to preserve and enrich one's own life at any cost.

As followers of Jesus, as we travel the long expanse of Ordinary Time from Pentecost to Advent, with Feasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Our Lady of Sorrow, and the scriptures of this weekend, we are challenged not to forget we follow a crucified Savior!