

22nd Sunday Homily Notes, August 30-31

If you want to be one of my disciples, you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me.

- **Pope Francis:**

Elected to do one thing: to redirect the Curia, the central offices of the Church in the Vatican, from being pompous group telling people what to do to being a servant of the church throughout the world.

Factors:

- **76 years old, an old man**
- **One lung**
- **Just retired as cardinal archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina**
- **Yet he took on the task at hand**

And what did he do?

- **Simplified clothing**
- **Drove in a smaller used car (not in the usual limousine)**
- **Did not move into papal palace, but lived in much simpler quarters**

Then he began to change how the church operates:

- **Consults with a committee of eight cardinals from around the world; not simply from an inner circle in the Vatican**
- **He steps up rigorous financial reform of the Vatican begun under the last pope**

- He calls for synod to focus on the challenges of family life.
- He challenges parishes throughout the world to become field hospitals for the spiritually and physically sick, not places for the spiritually elite

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2nd example:

Much closer to home:

There is a couple getting married here in a few weeks. They came into prepare for the ceremony and brought a ten year old son born of a previous relationship. They made it a point that they wanted to go out of the way to include him in everything they do:

- They want the youth to be the best man
- They want him mentioned in the vows
- They want to have the young man experience the sacrificial love the couple has for him.

Something very surprising happened when they left the appointment with me. As they were leaving, the boy and his couple were introduced to one of the volunteer secretaries at the front desk.

Then as they were going out the door, the young boy turned to the secretary and said, "Good bye, Miss Sally." When was the last time you heard a child be so polite? It is obviously the effect of the adults around him who are pouring out their lives in care for him.

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But not everyone wants to embrace the cross and take up the daily challenge of serving others. Not everyone wants to pay the price of being a disciple of the Lord.

I was reminded of this this summer by ten high school students from Henry Ford High School who worked for General Motors this summer. They helped clean up the area around the children's playground equipment last year and this year. They wrote a letter very critical of O'Hair Park Association and the people who live in the community because the teens found that a month after they had cleaned, there was much debris around the play area.

While their challenge to keep things clean is a good one, they still have not found out what Pope Francis and the couple with the ten year old boy have discovered....they will have to pour out their lives to keep the park clean; they will have to become servants, they will, in terms of Jesus' words in today's gospel, have to suffer and die before the park arises to new life.

It is very hard to enter into the full life of Christ, that is his passion, death and resurrection. We can identify with in the first reading when the prophet say to God, "You duped me". That is why Peter in today's gospel takes Jesus aside and verbally rips into him: he is saying to Jesus:

- I did not expect to have to suffer and die to bring about your kingdom.**
- I did not know what serving others would cost me.**
- I did not know that following you would mean I would have to suffer and die and rise.**

How about you and me? How can we radically our lives to be servants? Whether we are the pope or a parent or teen, how can we embrace Jesus' way of life even though we are told it will inevitably involve suffering and death?

We may begin by looking at how Jesus did it. It is only after Jesus' deep encounter with his Father at his baptism It is only after he hears the words, "You are my Son, my beloved one" ... that Jesus had the strength to pour out his life as a servant to others and the courage to challenge his disciples to follow.

Only if we can encounter the heart of God and know we are his beloved can we be followers of Jesus in good times and bad, serving those in need and challenging others to join us.

Last week, Deacon Paul passed out cards with different words to describe Jesus. He invited us to search our hearts and reflect on who Jesus is for us, to enter into the heart of Jesus and know him on a very personal intimate level. I encourage you to take those cards and reflect on the different names given to Jesus. Let him speak to your heart in prayer.

It does not matter whether we are the pope or a ten year old boy or teens cleaning O'Hair Park playground. Only to the degree that we encounter the heart of Jesus and experience his profound love for us, can we be his servants in this world. Jesus' words are not only for Peter: they are for all who are his disciples. Anyone who wishes to follow me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. We are all on our way to Jerusalem to suffer and die and rise with Christ.

For we have discovered that his way of living is the source of lasting joy and peace.