

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
September 3, 2023

Gospel: (Matthew 16:21-27)

Jesus said to his disciples: “*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 will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay all according to his conduct.*”

Reflection:

Lose life and find life. Cross and glory. This is the paschal mystery in a nutshell. Sometimes our response to living the paschal mystery is enthusiastic because things are going well and we don’t realize the demands. Then, when the going gets rough, we bog down. The challenge is to let go so *God* can lead us. We need to surrender ourselves. The paschal mystery isn’t just a concept; it is a turning of the heart toward God’s love working in us, but not without its demands. Even sharing in Jesus’ divine glory means that we must share in his sufferings and death. (Living Liturgy, p. 228)

Vincentian Meditation:

“Service to God’s people demands a price. Christians must put aside their own prejudices, comfortable circumstances, and favorite ideas in order to do the will of God. This sort of discipline calls Christians to die to themselves in order to follow Christ. St. Vincent called this discipline *mortification*. Mortification, or dying to self, has sometimes become confused with self-hate, repression...or co-dependency. However, dying to self is a core value in the Christian Testament. St. Vincent believed that mortification had to be a conscious choice. With the grace of God, people could be willing to make the hard sacrifices that love demands. With God’s help, they could detach themselves from—or die—to all that was not Christ so that they could put on Jesus Christ. (McKenna, Praying with Vincent, p.83, 85)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In what ways have you been called to *mortification*—“to deny yourself, and take up your cross”?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, give us the grace to deny ourselves,
-so that we can lose our life in order to find it.
Lord Jesus, give us the grace to carry our cross,
-so that we can learn *mortification* in the spirit
of St. Vincent.

Amen

