



Matthew 16:21-27

21 From that time Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. **22** Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord,' he said. 'This must not happen to you.' **23** But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.' **24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. **25** For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. **26** What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life? **27** 'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

Other readings: Jeremiah 20:7-9 Psalm 62 (63) Romans 12:1-2

Last week we heard Peter's profession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the words spoken by Christ to Peter: 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church.' The conversation between Jesus and Peter continues in today's gospel and takes a very different turn. The suffering and death of Jesus will cast a shadow over the rest of the gospel.

Peter is shocked to hear Jesus speak for the first time of his approaching suffering, death and resurrection, shocked that the Messiah should suffer such a fate. Amid the differing opinions about God's Messiah, there was no expectation of suffering and death. Jesus himself, however, understood that the Messiah was also to be a 'suffering servant'.

The lesson for Peter is a lesson for all. Whatever our position in the Church we must be open to the unexpected ways of God, ready to learn new things, not to prefer 'man's way' to God's. The Christian is not called to position and prosperity in this world, but to self-sacrifice in the service of others. This is a constant challenge, which will often lead us on narrow and difficult paths. We can only face this reality knowing that Jesus has trodden the path before us, and that this road leads to the fulness of life.

The first reading, from one of the 'confessions' of the prophet Jeremiah, reveals the prophet's struggle and enduring commitment to preaching the word.

Am I open to the unexpected ways of God?

What are the crosses in my life that I refuse to carry willingly?

Let us pray for the courage and endurance we need in our Christian lives.

Let us pray for all who seek to alleviate the sufferings of others.

