

Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

We are all aware from our own experience just how difficult it is to really know someone. (Example of a couple with 20 years together). Even those who have been sharing each other's lives for many years don't necessarily know each other fully.

When Jesus asked his disciples the question, 'Who do people say I am?' He was checking to see how well people had come to know Him. The answers that He received shows that people had **some insight** about who He was, even though that was still very limited. Jesus was neither Elijah, nor John the Baptist nor one of the prophets, although He had something in common with all of them. (and that is why they were kind of confused about who He really was).

Jesus then went on to ask his disciples, '**Who do you say that I am?**' Jesus had chosen them to be with Him; they had seen and heard a lot of Him, and His expectations were, initially, not disappointed. The answer provided by Peter was good to reveal Jesus' identity more than what other people were giving, 'You are the Christ, the Messiah'. Peter was right, because Jesus was really the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

However, it soon became clear that even Peter did not know Jesus very well. **If we struggle to know those closest to us and, even, to know ourselves, it is not surprising that we struggled, and continue to struggle, to know Jesus.**

The question that Jesus addressed to his disciples, 'Who do you say I am?' is addressed to all of us. We would probably all give different answers to that question, but one thing is certain, none of the answers would be completely satisfactory. An important part of our baptismal calling is to come to know the Lord with our mind and with our heart. Jesus has revealed himself to us, and continues to reveal Himself to us **IN and THROUGH** the Holy Spirit. Of course, we will only know the Lord fully when we see Him face to face.

The Gospel says that Peter knew that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, but he had no idea about the kind of Messiah that Jesus would become. Immediately after Peter's moment of insight into Jesus, Jesus went on to reveal a little more about Himself. He told the disciples that He was to go through sufferings, to be rejected by the religious leaders of the time, and to be put to death.

This was not the kind of Messiah Peter had in mind, and so he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. **Peter's reaction to Jesus is not different from how we react to each other. Most of the time we have a certain image of people, and we expect them to fit that image.** When they show themselves to be more mysterious, more complex, than our image of them, we can be slow to accept them. That is why the way we relate to our brothers and sisters will always reflect the way we know Jesus. **Peter did not expect a suffering Messiah and that is why he struggled to accept a Messiah who had to travel the way of the cross.** Perhaps he understood that following such a Messiah means that he himself would have to go through the same Passion (...), **yet, following Jesus meant and will always mean to drink OF HIS CUP.**

However, Jesus cannot be fully understood apart from the Cross, because **His death reveals who He is more fully even than His life.** His death reveals Jesus to be someone who was totally faithful to God and to all God's people; it is above all His death that reveals the quality of Jesus' love for God and for all of us. Therefore, it is not surprising that the cross has become the dominant symbol of Christianity: **symbol of LOVE FOR US AND FAITHFULNESS TO GOD THE FATHER OF JESUS AND OURS, symbol of victory, symbol of our Salvation.**

Brothers and Sisters,

Because Jesus had to go the way of the cross, He calls us, His followers, to take up our cross and follow Him. The language of **'taking up our cross'** means choosing freely the Cross of Jesus. Following Jesus and remaining faithful to Him, will always mean freely choosing the loving way for his sake. This may be difficult, but it will be the way of life, both for us and for others.