

- *“If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well, ” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?”*
- In today’s Gospel reading we see Jesus was trying to tell Peter and the other disciples something really important. He had just told them what the future held. The pain and trouble ahead. The joy of the resurrection to come. But the disciples didn’t understand, wouldn’t accept it!!
- We see Jesus got frustrated, lost His temper with Peter- yells at him. It doesn’t mean Jesus stopped loving Peter – it just means Jesus “lost it” for a moment. Like we do at times.
- But it is important to learn from what Jesus did after His angry outburst. He patiently, calmly, lovingly tries to explain again. Jesus doesn’t give up on them.
- That’s one important lesson from today’s Gospel reading: God doesn’t give up on us and we shouldn’t give up on ourselves ... or on others.
- Let’s get back to that really important thing Jesus was trying to explain. Jesus was explaining what the Messiah was all about; what the Kingdom of God is like and how that Kingdom will come about.
- The problem was Jesus’ message didn’t match with Peter’s hopes and ideas. Peter had a different idea of how things should happen and what God’s Kingdom would be like. (Aren’t we so much like Peter?)
- Peter and the disciples lived in difficult times, under the rule of an oppressive Roman government. In Peter’s mind the Messiah would

rally the Jewish people, defeat the romans who occupied Jewish lands, and bring back the days when Israel had their own king.

- Peter and the other disciples were looking for Jesus Christ Superstar, who would make the world right, not Jesus the carpenter who expected them to make it right. (How often do we give God our solution and tell God: make it happen?)
- But Jesus message was very different. Jesus told His disciples He came to establish something far greater than an earthly kingdom.
- Jesus made no promises of an easy life, no promise of power or position or prominence over other people. He spoke of love and care for others; forgiving your enemy. He spoke of carrying crosses.
- Jesus told those disciples (and each of us): I am going to live life a certain way; value certain things; have a certain attitude toward the world where loving God and others deeply is top priority. Jesus said He would be criticized, rejected and eventually put to death to silence Him and these teachings.
- Then Jesus makes them (and us) a promise. He uses these words: “Whoever wishes to save his life, will lose it, but whoever loses his life, for my sake, will find (save) it”. Let’s look closely at this to see what Jesus means.
- It is important to note that the word “lose” can carry both negative and positive meanings. In the negative sense it can mean something I value is gone. I don’t know where it is or how to find it.
- But in the positive sense “lose” can mean to leave something behind and move forward; shed yourself of something – make a change for the better. (I lost 5 pounds on my diet. I lost that bad attitude.)
- Jesus uses the word “lose” here in the most positive sense.

- Jesus tells His disciples (that includes us!) to lose, shed that attitude of living just for yourself, doing only what you want, ignoring the needs of others – that’s **not** saving your life!
- This is Jesus’ promise to each of us: “If you put your faith in me, follow my teachings and trust me; If you lose yourself by changing your life to be more like mine – I promise you a share in the kingdom of God both now and forever. And I promise to be there to help you along the way.
- In our second reading today, St. James reminds us that to be a follower of Jesus requires two things: Faith and Works. Both are essential.
- Faith means trusting that God loves you dearly; that God is close by and interested in your life; that God is not afraid to step into the messiness of life to bring healing and love. How many times have we thought: God, how did you let this happen? How did you let me get into this mess?
- For the early disciples of Jesus, losing your life for Jesus’ sake meant real persecution. People actually lost their fortunes even their lives for being “Christians”. In some parts of today’s world there is still persecution for those who profess to be Christian and these Christians should always be in our prayers.
- Faith means losing our life for Jesus’ sake and avoiding the trap of accepting norms and values the world says are okay but are contrary to Jesus teachings.
- But as St. James reminds us faith must be coupled with Acts.
- Acts: Finding the time to pray for others: being alert to the needs of others and reaching out to help. These are challenges in a world that calls us to put things and our own interest first. This weekend we remember the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. And as we remember

we recall so many individuals who combined those two essential elements: faith and acts. Even at the expense of their own life.

- But Jesus tells us if we overcome these challenges we will find life. Real life.
- We will find who we really are: Children of God.
- We will find why we were created. Find that true purpose, unique for each one of us but always centered on loving God and others.
- We will find real life with a God who is not far off, but close and interested and madly in love with us.
- Cardinal Newman wrote a wonderful prayer asking God to help him lose his life in order to find real life. I'd like to conclude with part of that prayer. Here is the prayer:
- Dear Lord, flood my soul with your spirit and life. Possess my whole being so completely that all my life may be only a reflection of You. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul. Let them look up and no longer see me, but only you. Amen.