

24th Sunday OT Year B
September 15-16, 2018

You are thinking not as God does, but as humans.

Readings: Isaiah 50:5-9; James 2:14-18; Mark 8: 27-35

“Get behind me Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” At first glance, these incredibly strong words of Jesus might seem a bit puzzling—in fact, quite puzzling. After all, how is it possible to think like God when we are mere humans? At the same time, we have all been given the most incredible example in the life of Jesus, whom we are invited to follow. We have been told to “put on Christ,” to drink from the wellspring of his truth and grace. If we do this, are we not thinking like God?

Christ follows his questions about his identity with a prediction of his suffering and Passion, the necessity of which Peter began to question. And so Peter argued with Jesus; his misunderstanding leads to the central feature of this passage, namely Peter’s rebuke by Jesus, one of the most chilling passages in all of the New Testament. Being rebuked is in itself embarrassing, but to be likened to Satan must have been particularly disheartening.

We are no different today in our hopes. Would we not welcome it if someone came into our lives to fix the problems in the world or the Church? Some look to politics to accomplish this, and while we should have confidence in our government, it cannot fulfill the role as a messiah. Jesus communicated that he was not to reign on earth as a triumphant king, but rather as a Suffering Servant.

Thus, without realizing it, Peter was opposing God’s plan by trying to prevent Christ’s suffering, not seeing beyond the human lens. Peter bristled at human suffering—don’t we all?—focused on fixing everything from an earthly perspective. But Jesus was **more** than the Messiah; he was the Son of God, who would freely accept the humiliation and shameful death upon the Cross for our sins. May we accept that the path to heaven includes both moments of tremendous joy and consolation as well as times of great pain and suffering, such as we experience today in the Church. The Cross,

the ultimate sign of defeat and humiliation, became itself the very instrument by which our Savior redeemed mankind. Yesterday, more than 700 people came to the Cathedral for a special Holy Hour of Reparation and Healing, a small but significant step.

Peter could only see pain and desperately desired to stop it from happening to our Lord. We too desire to stop the pain of others, but with Jesus, he had to share the necessity of his passion with those closest to him. They needed to understand the high cost of discipleship. So do we. The road ahead will not be easy, but your assurances of prayer have lifted my spirits in a significant way.

We must continue to pray for guidance and enlightenment for those to whom the care of souls has been entrusted. Our Shepherds especially need our prayers, our encouragement and yes, at times, they need to hear of our anger and frustration at a seeming lack of progress towards being fully transparent.

Saint James reminded us in today's second reading that it matters little what we say if our actions are not reflective of that reality. If we claim to be people of faith but do not even lift a finger to help others in need, we are not thinking like God, but as humans. When we express genuine sorrow and contrition for wrongs, this helps, and yet, it is not enough, not by a long shot.

Doctrine, vitally important as it is, is not a substitute for action. Praying for a situation to better itself is good, but must not preclude concrete action. When we hold each other in prayer, we ourselves become more Christ like. Together we will put on the mind of Christ and journey to the Father.