

Carrying Our Cross

Among Jesus' many teachings we find this, rather harsh-sounding, invitation: Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

I suspect that each of us has a gut-sense of what this means and what it will cost us; but, I suspect too that many of us misunderstand that Jesus is asking here and struggle unhealthily with this invitation.

What, concretely, does Jesus mean by this?

To answer that, I would like to lean on some insights offered by James Martin in his book, *Jesus, A Pilgrimage*. He suggests that taking up our cross daily and giving up life in order to find deeper life means six interpenetrating things:

First, it means accepting that suffering is a part of our lives. Accepting our cross and giving up our lives means that, at some point, we have to make peace with the unalterable fact that frustration, disappointment, pain, misfortune, illness, unfairness, sadness, and death are a part of our lives and they must ultimately be accepted without bitterness. As long as we nurse the notion that pain in our lives is something we need not accept, we will habitually find ourselves bitter—bitter for not having accepted the cross. Second, taking up our cross and giving up our lives, means that we may not, in our suffering, pass on any bitterness to those around us. We have a strong inclination, almost as part of our natural instincts, to make others suffer when we are suffering: If I'm unhappy, I will make sure that others around me are unhappy too! This does not mean, as Martin points out, that we cannot share our pain with others. But there's a healthy way of doing this, where our sharing leaves others free, as opposed to an unhealthy kind of sharing which subtly tries to make others unhappy because we are unhappy. There's a difference between healthily groaning under the weight of our pain and unhealthily whining in self-pity and bitterness under that weight. The cross gives us permission to do the former, but not the latter. Jesus groaned under the weight of his cross, but no self-pity, whining, or bitterness issued forth from his lips or his beaten body.

Third, walking in the footsteps of Jesus as he carries his cross means that we must accept some other deaths before our physical death, that we are invited to let some parts of ourselves die. When Jesus invites us to die in order to find life, he is not, first of all, talking about physical death. If we live in adulthood, there are a myriad of other deaths that we must undergo before we die physically. Maturity and Christian discipleship are about perennially naming our deaths, claiming our births, mourning our losses, letting go of what's died, and receiving new spirit for the new life that we are now living. These are the stages of the paschal mystery, and the stages of growing up. There are daily deaths.

Fourth, it means that we must wait for the resurrection, that here in this life all symphonies must remain unfinished. The book of Proverbs tells us that sometimes in the midst of pain the best we can do is put our mouths to the dust and wait. Any real understanding of the cross agrees. So much of life and discipleship is about waiting, waiting in frustration, inside injustice, inside pain, in longing, battling bitterness, as we wait for something or someone to come and change our situation. We spend about 98% of our lives waiting for fulfillment, in small and big ways. Jesus' invitation to us to follow him implies waiting, accepting to live inside an unfinished symphony.

Fifth, carrying our cross daily means accepting that God's gift to us is often not what we expect. God always answers our prayers but, often times, by giving us what we really need rather than what we think we need. The Resurrection, says James Martin, does not come when we expect it and rarely fits our notion of how a resurrection should happen. To carry your cross is to be open to surprise.

Finally, taking up your cross and being willing to give up your life means living in a faith that believes that nothing is impossible for God. As James Martin puts it, this means accepting that God is greater than the human imagination. Indeed, whenever we succumb to the notion that God cannot offer us a way out of our pain into some kind of newness, it's precisely because we have reduced God down to the size of our own limited imagination. It's only possible to accept our cross, to live in trust, and to not grow bitter inside pain if we believe in possibilities beyond what we can imagine, namely, if we believe in the Resurrection. We can take up our cross when we begin to believe in the Resurrection.

Ron Rolheiser

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 16, 2018

St. Stephen's Indian Mission

www.saintstephensmission.com

856-7806

33 St. Stephens Road

PO Box 250

St. Stephens, WY 82524

Fr. Jim Heiser.....Pastor
Fr. Bryce Lungren.....Associate Pastor
Sr. Monica Suhayda, CSJ.....Past. Asst./ Gift Shop 856-4330
Patti McMahon.....Director of Religious Education

Blessed Sacrament & St. Joseph's Church

332-9090

Sr. Teresa Frawley, OSF.....Past. Asst./Director of Religious Education

St. Stephen's Church

Friday: Adoration followed by benediction 3:45pm

Saturday: Confessions 2:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Sunday Masses: 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM

Tuesday & Thursday: Mass at 7:15am

Wednesday & Friday: Mass at 5:00pm

1st Saturday: Adoration at 8:00am; Mass at 9:00am;

Anointing for anyone wishing to be anointed

St. Joseph's Church, Ethete

Sunday Mass: 11:00 AM

Confessions 15 minutes before Mass

Wednesday & Friday Communion Service at 5:15 PM

Blessed Sacrament, Ft. Washakie

Saturday Vigil Mass 4:30 PM

Confessions 15 minutes before Mass

.....
Come in seeking; come in wondering; come in hurting. Come into this house of companionship and compassion. Come in. You are welcome here. Our faith Family opens its doors to you and in the name of Christ, bids you Welcome!
.....

The purpose of St. Stephen's Indian Mission, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church among the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho, is to grow into a strong community of believers, sharing our lives in the Holy Spirit, forming one welcoming People of God, who are committed to Jesus Christ, His gospel and mission.

Readings September 17th through September 23rd:

Mon: 1 Cor 11:17-26, 33; Ps 40:7-10, 17; Lk 7:1-10
 Tue: 1 Cor 12:12-14, 27-31a; Ps 100:1-5; Lk 7:11-17
 Wed: 1 Cor 12:31-13:13; Ps 33:2-5, 12, 22; Lk 7:31-35
 Thur: 1 Cor 15:1-11; Ps 118:1b-2, 16ab-17, 28; Lk 7:36-50
 Fri: Eph 4:1-7, 11-13; Ps 19:2-5; Mt 9:9-13
 Sat: 1 Cor 15:33-37, 42-49; Ps 56:10-14; Lk 8:4-15
 Sun: Wis 2:12, 17-20; Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6-8; Jas 3:16-4:3; Mk 9:30-37

**Sunday Ministry Schedule-St. Stephen's
 9/23/18**

9:00 Mass

Lector: Marilu Duncan
 Extraordinary Ministers: Jim & Theresa Cunningham & Carol Kellogg

5:00 Mass

Lector: Volunteer Needed
 Extraordinary Ministers: Volunteers needed

Parish Collection

9/9 \$2025.70
"Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Corinthians 9"

Happenings:

9/16: Rosary @ 8:20am
 Coffee and donuts after the 9am Mass
 9/22: Music Practice 3pm

We will not be taking any donations for the thrift "store" and are planning a clothing give-away October 5th.

Having Mass offered for an anniversary, marriage, special occasion, gift or in memory of someone is a special gift. Cards are available at the office. Diocesan guideline is \$10.00 for a Mass.



St. Stephen's Religious Ed/Baptism

Please plan to attend three classes if you wish your child to be baptized. Next classes will be in October on 10/1, 10/8 & 10/15 @ 5:30pm.
 Registration for Religious Education for K-8 students will be on Sunday, September 30th after the 9am Mass. Classes for K-8 grades begin on Sunday, October 7th after the 9am Mass.
 Students who want to receive First Holy Communion must be in at least the 2nd grade and attend class each week until May.
 Students who wish to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation must be in at least the 7th grade and attend class each week until May.
 Adults who wish to be baptized or confirmed are invited to join class starting on Tuesday, October 9th (5:30am-7pm) at St. Stephens or Thursday, October 11th (5:30pm-7pm) at St. Joseph's. This will be a weekly class that runs until Easter.

If you have questions regarding baptism or religious education classes for the fall, please call the religious education office (856-7806 ext. 16).

Mass Intentions/Communion Service & Schedule this week:

9/15: 4:30pm Blessed Sacrament Special Intention
 9/16: 9am St. Stephen's +Eileen Krause
 11am St. Joseph's +Mike Bearing
 5pm St. Stephen's Nee nii teenitooni' (For the people)
 9/18: 7:15am St. Stephen's No Mass today
 9/19: 5:00pm St. Stephen's No Mass today
 5:15pm St. Joseph's No communion service today
 9/20: 7:15am St. Stephen's Special Intention
 9/21: 5:00pm St. Stephen's Dominic Littlesield
 5:15pm St. Joseph's Communion Service
 9/22: 4:30pm Blessed Sacrament Nee nii teenitooni' (For the people)
 9/23: 9am St. Stephen's +Anita Knapp
 11am St. Joseph's +Mike Bearing
 5pm St. Stephen's Celeste Spoonhunter

"One part of our ongoing mission as the Church is to offer people a better life. The key word in all of this is in *offer*. The Church doesn't force people to do things. The Church is a lover who comes to propose to the beloved (you and me). The Church proposes certain courses of action for certain situations, just as a physician offers you a prescription. But your physician does not force you to get your strip filled. Nor does she force you to take the medicine. We are free to choose. The Church proposes to you and me a certain way of life. Each of us, like the beloved who is proposed to, can accept or reject the proposal. But whatever our decision, we will live with it forever. *"Rediscover Catholicism" Matthew Kelly*

Save the date! Oktoberfest, Sat. Sept. 22, 5-9 PM.
 Great Food and beverages!
 St. Margaret's School gym, 609 E. Park St. entrance.
 Proceeds to benefit summer '19 Italy youth pilgrimage.

September Institute
 Father Jim and Father Bryce will be at the September Institute so there will not be Mass on Tuesday or Wednesday this week.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

Praise Him now and always!

Blessed Sacrament & St. Joseph's

Baptism Classes

The last Sunday of each month will be Baptism Sunday at St. Joseph's. Three classes are required. Please call Sister Teresa at 332-4415 to schedule classes.