

Lenten Vespers. Sunday, March 8, 2015, Caritas Christi Chapel

A Reading from the Gospel according to Mark (8:34-38)

Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words the Son of Man will be ashamed of when He comes in glory with the holy angels." Then, he said to them, "Amen I say to you, there are some standing here who will not see death until they see that the Kingdom of God has come in power."

Reflection Given by Sister Anne Flynn

As we entered the Chapel this afternoon, we dipped our fingers in Holy Water and blessed ourselves with the "Sign of the Cross." This is the most universal and public of all actions of Faith in our Catholic Church. This Sign, passed down through the centuries, is so revered by the Church that the Sign of the Cross begins and completes all of our public prayers.



As we sang, "Christe Salvator: Jesus Christ, Savior, Son of God", the Cross bearing the image of Jesus was carried to the altar. Let us look at this Crucifix. Notice, it is standing upright. There are two beams, a horizontal and a vertical beam. The stand supports the vertical beam which enables the Cross to remain upright. This stand, a sign of our Faith, supports us as we follow Jesus and carry our cross.

After singing, “The Cross of Jesus” in which we asked Jesus to renew us and strengthen us through His cross, Sister Catherine led us in making the Sign of the Cross and we continued with singing our Psalms in today’s vespers. All These actions are signs of Faith and Jesus is the focus of our Faith. Faith is the foundation for our ongoing relationship with Jesus. Each time we make the Sign of the Cross, we are making a public confession of our Faith in Jesus Christ. We entered our life of Faith through the doorway of our Baptism and Jesus invited us on this journey of a lifetime with Him. Our Faith grew and matured as we journeyed through childhood, adolescence, adulthood to this present day, and, will be completed when we walk through that final doorway to our union with God in eternity.

Pope Francis, during an audience last June with over 9,000 students, teachers, alumni and parents from Italy and Albania, encouraged the students to ask him questions about living their Faith. One student asked: “What can you say to help me and others like me?” Pope Francis responded, and I quote: “The life of Faith is a journey. Journeying is an art because if we are always in a hurry, we get tired and don’t arrive at our journey’s goal. . . . There are dark days, even days when we fail, even days when we fall . . . but don’t be afraid of failures. Don’t be afraid of falling. . . . Get up right away and continue the journey. This is beautiful. . . . Walk with friends, with those who love us, who help us. It helps us to arrive precisely at that goal, where we are supposed to arrive.”

Our Pope’s response reminds us also that we are not alone on our Faith journey. We need others to walk with us, support us. During the Lenten season, The Stations of the Cross are prayed here on Fridays and in your parishes and these give us an excellent example of how God the Father and Holy Spirit provided support for Jesus along His final human journey.

In the Third Station, Jesus fell the first time and as he got up, he met His mother, whose love supported Him all his life. Then Simon of Cyrene, willingly or not, helped Jesus carry His cross. In The Sixth Station, we recall that Veronica wiped the blood, sweat and tears from Jesus’ face. When Jesus struggled to his feet after His second fall, His women disciples with their tears of sympathy and support

gave Him the courage to move on. Yes, Jesus needed support along his final journey, just as we need support along our Faith journey.

In today's Scripture reading, Jesus reminded us that "Whoever wishes to come after me must take up his cross and follow me." Faith in Jesus—carry the cross and Jesus will support us along our journey! I'd like to complete this reflection this afternoon, by asking you - did you notice the banner hanging above the walkway leading into Caritas Christ? The banner contains the phrase: "Wake up the World".

Pope Francis, during the 82nd General Assembly of Superior Generals in Rome, November 29, 2013 acknowledged a special group who took up their cross and followed Jesus in a particular way of Life – as consecrated religious, and he announced that the year 2015 would be dedicated to Consecrated Life as this year marks the 50 anniversary of the Vatican II Decree on Religious Life, "Perfectae Caritatis". The Pope said of those in consecrated life: "They are men and women who can awaken the world". This is the reason for the banner which will remain on display to celebrate our Year of Consecrated Life.

You have joined us today during this year, 2015, along our journey of Faith and we thank you for your support and encouragement. We all responded to our Faith today symbolized by the Cross, our Hymns and our Prayers. Let us continue our friendship and support each other as we journey together to "Wake up the World" until we go through that final doorway where we will rejoice with Jesus Christ, Our Father and the Holy Spirit. Now, we invite you to join with us as we sing the hymn composed specifically for this year dedicated to Consecrated Life. "Wake the World with Dawning Joy".

