

22nd Sunday  
8/30/2020

## THE RESET

It is disrespectful, unhealthy and even dangerous to force someone to be what we want that person to be rather than to let that person be and become who he or she is meant to be. In a marriage, a friendship, a dating relationship, with our children or even with our parents; when we try to force someone into a box to satisfy our needs, even if we think it is a good thing, the result is bad. Now sometimes we're called to challenge and even correct each other but this can be something different. In today's gospel when Peter, no doubt with the best of intentions, tries to make Jesus be the type of messiah he wants Jesus to be rather than the type of messiah Jesus is to be.

A little background. The gospel today picks up right where it left off last weekend. Jesus asked, *who do you say that I am?* Peter said, the Christ, the Son of the living God. He gave the right answer and to use a baseball analogy, he hit it out of the park. In turn, Jesus gave him a new name and a special office, a special ministry. A ministry carried on today by Pope Francis. It ends with Jesus strictly telling *his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ*. Why is that?

The answer is found in today's gospel. Jesus makes the first of what we call his passion predictions. Jesus is the messiah but not the type of messiah Peter and the others think he will be or that they want him to be. Jesus will be a suffering messiah, a crucified messiah and ultimately, a risen messiah. Peter takes Jesus aside and gently remonstrates with him. Jesus responds to Peter in a way that is public and shocking: *Get behind me Satan*. Jesus doesn't want the disciples talking about him being the messiah because they do not understand what kind of messiah Jesus will be. They just don't get it.

Peter is trying to put Jesus into a box of what he thinks Jesus should be. That is disrespectful, unhealthy and even dangerous and hence Jesus' harsh words. If last week Peter hit it out of the ballpark, this week he strikes out and he strikes out big time. And yet, Peter stays in the game. He doesn't get it but he doesn't leave Jesus. *Get behind me*. In other words, follow me and Peter does just that.

You are not thinking as God does, but as human beings do. Jesus sings a tune in a different key and it is our job to harmonize with him and not the other way around. St. Paul says much the same thing in the second reading, *Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*. The 20th century British author, G.K. Chesterton said, A dead thing goes with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it. As followers of Christ we're not to be

conformed to this age but to be transformed; to affirm what is good around us but also to against the stream, to challenge and work to change what is bad.

And from there it doesn't get any easier. Jesus' talk about being killed, that talk about the cross, doesn't have to do with just him. It has to do with all those who would follow him. It has to do with you and me. Jesus speaks of denying ourselves—that can certainly go against the grain of our culture. Some people won't deny themselves simply to the point of wearing a mask while around others for the safety of others. Jesus speaks of taking up our cross which wasn't a pious platitude but a gruesome form of a slow death. He speaks of following him and that through giving our lives, we save them.

You can't accuse Jesus of false advertising or of the so-called prosperity gospel where the goal is to get rich and get everything we want and then claim that it's God's will. Not only that, sometimes we may think that doing the right thing and following Jesus will keep us out of trouble and sometimes that's true. But sometimes following Christ and doing what is right will get us *into* trouble or even worse. Jesus on the cross is Exhibit A.

This was the experience of Jeremiah. Now Jeremiah was probably the saddest and hence one of the most moving of all the prophets. In the first reading he cries out, he complains to God, you duped me, you seduced me, you tricked me and yet despite all the trouble it causes him, Jeremiah remains faithful to his mission. What Jesus offers Peter, the apostles and us, is a reset. He reminds them that he is to be a different type of messiah, a different type of Christ.

This is the first of the passion predictions. Jesus will give two more and in some of his parables he will allude to his death as well and despite all that, the disciples still didn't get it. In fact, it took a long time for them to get it. But eventually they got it. And actually there's something comforting about all that for us. It can take more than once for us to get it, to not try to force Jesus to be who we want him to be in a way that's disrespectful, unhealthy and even dangerous. But Peter and the apostles eventually got it and so can we.

When was the last time you felt someone was putting you in a box trying to make you be who that person wanted you to be? It's not a good feeling is it? When was the last time you tried to put someone in a box to make that person be what you wanted that person to be? When was the last time you tried to put Jesus in a box making Him who you wanted Him to be?

Instead, with lives of intentional faith, nourished by the Eucharist, may we always respect those around us for who they are. May we seek to accept the reset Jesus offers and may we seek to accept Jesus on his terms, as God thinks, not conforming ourselves to this age but rather being transformed by the renewal of our minds *so that we may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.*