

WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE... WILL FIND IT

The Gospel we have just heard is a continuation of last Sunday's Gospel, where Jesus asked his disciples, "And who do you say that I am?"

In response to Peter's answer, Jesus acknowledged his faith and called him blessed. However, this Sunday, Jesus rebukes Peter, telling him, "Get behind me, Satan," because his thoughts are not those of God.

What caused Jesus's dismay, or why did he say that to Peter?

First, we must recognize that it is not enough simply to ask ourselves who Jesus is and answer correctly. We need to let ourselves be guided by his own understanding of his mission and place ourselves, as disciples, on that path.

When we hear Jesus speak of carrying the cross or laying down one's life, it often triggers a sense of resistance, because we tend to think the way the world thinks.

Yet, Jesus invites us to take a step of faith and walk in God's ways.

Surely, when Peter heard about the cross and the suffering Jesus would face, it was not to his liking. He believed in Jesus, but he wanted to tailor Jesus's mission to fit his own ideas.

This is what happens today: we want a Christianity made to measure—a "tailor-made" Christianity—where we add what we like and remove what is unpleasant to us.

If we follow this logic, we place ourselves at the center of our faith.

And we end up changing the first commandment—to love God above all things—into: "You shall love yourself above all things."

These are two different paths.

Peter experienced his first conversion when he decided to leave his fishing nets and follow Christ. But that is not enough. A second conversion is required: following Christ along God's path. And that includes carrying the cross and denying oneself.

And that is where the real challenge; ...to follow Jesus through His teachings and commandments.

How often do we want to follow Jesus, yet balk at being asked to attend Mass, complete catechism classes, or meet the requirements for the sacraments? In doing so, we are refusing to deny ourselves and take up the cross.

That is why Jesus says: "Whoever gives up his life for my sake will save it."

Today, we need to re-examine our faith and our path of conversion: do we want to follow Jesus according to His teachings, or do we want a "Christianity-lite" tailored to our own preferences?

The answer lies with each of us. May our Mother in heaven help us to respond faithfully to this invitation Christ extends to us. Amen.