

Chaplain's Bulletin September 15, 2024



Dear Folks,

Saturday, we celebrate the Exaltation of The Cross, and Sunday, we read of Jesus predicting His passion. This section of Mark (8:22-10) is all about the cross, about Jesus preparing to carry it and teaching that His followers will have to follow with a cross as well. People are very slow to get it. Three times He will explain that He will be rejected and put to death, and Mark emphasizes that immediately afterward, the apostles show they don't get it. We are accustomed to talking about the cross in theory, but it is harder to accept in practice. Jesus had just cured a blind man, but it took two tries. After the first try, the blind man could see, but not clearly (people looked like walking trees). After the second try, he could see clearly. Those who thought Jesus was just a teacher and wonder worker are people who can see, but not clearly. I've found some who seem to see themselves as customers in the Church rather than coworkers in mission, and they cooperate (maybe) if they get things the way they want them. They can see, but not clearly. I've asked practicing Catholics, "why is it a good thing to be a practicing Catholic Christian?" and would get some answers like, "I get a good feeling on Sunday morning," or "It is good to get together with the people," or "it gives moral guidance." These are people who see, but not clearly.

In 1776, Thomas Paine wrote an essay called "The Crisis." It began, "THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value."

Given what is happening in the world and what is happening in the Church, I think it is a safe bet that being Church is not going to get easier any time soon. In fact, it will likely get less convenient, more challenging, and require more people to step up beyond what they are accustomed to. Those whose faith is shallow shall very possibly wander away, as have so many before. Those who remain, however, will be more prepared than ever to rise to the level of heroism to which God calls His saints. I see my job as preparing people so that more will endure, and then they will be more prepared for the rebuild.

If following Jesus becomes harder, will you still follow? If it becomes a lot harder?

If being Church becomes harder, will you still do it? If it becomes much harder?

God is calling us to greatness.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim