

Gospel Reflection by Michael Brown, worship leader

In today's Gospel reading Jesus is telling his disciples of the suffering he is to endure at his trial and execution at the hands of those with worldly power and authority. Peter, whom Jesus in last Sunday's Gospel declared was the rock of the church, begins to rebuke Jesus and is sharply rebuked himself. Peter, who had already understood that Jesus is the Messiah, is still thinking of worldly concerns and not on the divine. Jesus tells his disciples that in order to be one of his followers you must take up your cross and follow him. Given that he said this as he was speaking of the very real and not metaphorical cross he was to endure makes being a follower of Jesus seem bleak and hopeless.

What does it mean to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Jesus? Surely it does not literally mean carrying your cross the way Jesus did to your own death. It does mean setting your mind on the divine and not worldly things. In St. Paul's reading today he gives us a glimpse of what Jesus was talking about. It means showing genuine love and affection for everyone, the renunciation of evil, extending hospitality to all, living in harmony and peaceably with everyone. It means being humble and kind, especially to those who are of a lower social status than you. It means not holding grudges and getting even for wrongs committed against you but letting God be the judge and the repayer. It means not conforming to the patterns of this world but being transformed by the renewing of your mind towards God's will.

In short, it means loving God and your neighbor. It means being the change in this world towards the beloved community. It means loving all of God's children in the way God loves us. It means walking in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us. It means making your life an offering and sacrifice to God to do his will and not just your own.