

Homily for September 1, 2002
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A

By Father Charles Bowes

Jeremiah 20:7-9
Romans 12:1-2
Matthew 16:21-27

To embrace or surrender the cross of Christ is ever a choice.

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me,” says Jesus in Matthew 16.

This cross Jesus talks about, which means true life, is not equated with the ordinary sufferings of life like sickness and hardships and headaches. Rather, this cross of which Jesus speaks is a choice. The cross Jesus talks about is not the pain and suffering that go with the territory of finitude or being fragile or mortal, operating with a body in space and time. This kind of cross we rightly try to avoid. When we can't, we usually hear some banal advice such as “grin and bear it,” or “that's the way life is.” True, the cross of Christ does indeed have some meaning with regards to the pain we suffer inevitably, especially in dying. It illuminates all human suffering, and gives us hope that there is some sense to it all. But the cross Jesus talks about is primarily a freely chosen passion, one that may not be welcome but is nonetheless accepted, even gladly, as part of something bigger, a larger effort. What really is at stake here is that the Lord is holding out an offer or a privilege to us. It is to love as he loves – and it is ever a choice to love as Jesus loves.

What turns human suffering into the cross of Christ is a choice we each can make, and here to tell us how this choice played out in her life is one of our parishioners whom Ms. Klich, our pastoral associate, will introduce.

To embrace or surrender the cross of Christ is ever a choice.