

## 22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Jeremiah 20:7-9

Romans 12:1-2 Matthew 16:21-27

### Peter: The Stumbling Block and the Way of the Cross

Reading about Simon Peter in the Gospels, you come to realize how much of a **'flawed disciple'** he was.

- His imperfections run right through his personality to the extent of making a fool of himself.
- He quickly gets himself in trouble because of his mouth.
- He surely has a "foot in mouth disease."

I personally take comfort in Simon Peter because he often can be used as a bad example at the right time.

The gospel story for today, is a continuation of last Sunday's story where Jesus gave him a 'gold star' when he gave the most fitting answer to his question: **"who do YOU say that I am?"**

- **"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,"** Simon Peter answered.
- There and then Jesus called him 'The Rock, **"and on this rock I will build my church."**
- Jesus even went on to give him **"the keys of the kingdom"**

After giving such a good answer, Jesus began to teach his disciples that **"the Son of man must suffer many things, that he will be rejected and killed and on the third day, rise from the dead,"** which is today's Gospel. What was the response of Peter to this?

**"O no Jesus. Nobody is going to lay a hand on you. You are not going to suffer. Not at all."**

Within the same conversation the very man who has received a gold star Jesus says today: **"Get behind me Satan. You are not on the side of God but of men."**

**Here is where Peter becomes a bad example but at a good time because we can learn something from his reaction**

- One minute ago, Peter was The Rock.
- One minute ago, Peter had the keys of the kingdom.

- One minute ago, Peter was The Rock on which the church was going to be built.

But one minute later today, Jesus says to Peter, **"Get behind me Satan...."**

- Peter had been a hero and then in a moment, he was a hindrance.
- Peter had been a rock and then in a flash he was a stumbling block.
- He had been a **super star** and then in the blink of an eye he was Satan.
- Peter was declared to be the foundation of the church and then became a flip-flop in a matter of moments.

Peter had the right theological answer; **"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,"** but he didn't understand, what the cross meant let alone accept it for his life.

There are two parts to Christianity and both of them need to be fulfilled.

The first part is to confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the second part of Christianity is to experience the cross.

- Peter got his gold star for theology - which is only a first part, but he failed the primary test about the cross.

What does it mean for us to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Christ?

Picking up the cross is something that you choose to do.

This is not just the ability to carry burdens because burdens are like accidents: you don't choose them, but they just come your way.

- To pick up the cross is to choose to serve the needs of others and thereby to serve God.
- To pick up the cross of Christ is to choose to pick up the burdens, thorns and pain of other people.
- ❖ Our faith will not be enough unless we made hard choices for the sake of others.