

22nd Sun OT – Matthew 16:21-27

Last Week, Mathew related how Peter gave Jesus a new name and was given in return the new name of ROCK. The time had come for Jesus to speak openly of his future death and resurrection. Peter would not listen. In response Jesus no longer called him ROCK but SATAN. Peter was a scandal, *a stumbling block*. Peter tempted Jesus to seek the glory of the kingdoms of this world. His thoughts were human thoughts and not the thoughts of God.

Jesus had more to say to the disciples. They had to deny themselves, carry the cross and follow Jesus. The cross will take different forms. For some, it will be the effort required to live up to the higher righteousness revealed by Jesus in his discourses like the *Sermon on the Mount*. It would include the denial of self, inevitable for any who live up to the demand of Jesus to “love the neighbor as oneself.” Yet Jesus has already taught that his burden is easy and his yoke is light.

Nicole Trahan, one of our Marianist Sisters living at the University of Dayton, Ohio, and head of our Vocations Ministry among other ministries, writes:

“Saint Paul exhorts us not to be conformed to this age. Wise words for us today. For what do we see in this age? We are in the midst of a global pandemic—hundreds of thousand have died preventable deaths, public health has become politicized, we see an uncovering of White nationalism—notice, not necessarily a rise, but an uncovering and perhaps a mainstreaming; systemic racism is still with us and the environment is in need of healing. This is the age in which we find ourselves. This is the age to which we **cannot** be conformed. We have to allow for a renewal of our minds...learning, growing, unlearning, challenging assumptions, revealing hidden biases...

Once we know, ***we have an obligation***. Once our eyes are opened to the reality around us, ***we cannot then close them and not see***. Once we’ve heard the cry of the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed, ***we cannot unhear their voices or stop listening***.”

“The Peters in our lives may say, “Heaven forbid!” And to that we should say, “Get behind me Satan. You are an obstacle to me!”

An article on the movie appeared in the NCR on the new hit movie called Barbie Land, which I found very interesting in light of today's gospel message. In an ideal world there would be no crosses, "...like Barbie Land, a happy place full of happy things; death is not part of the equation. Of course, until she meets the old woman on the bench, in the real world! For the first time, Barbie catches a glimpse of what a long life looks like. She sees it reflected in wrinkles and white hair; she sees the beauty, and the reality, of death...Remembering our death," the article continues, "is meant to remind us to live. When we keep in mind that someday our lives will come to an end, we can find gratitude for the present, even in suffering; we can decide how we want to live."

I don't want to spoil how the movie ends. You will just have to see the movie yourself or read the article in NCR. One of my teachers said that if we never died, one outcome would be that nothing would ever get done. What is the rush, there is always tomorrow. Or if no one ever suffered, we would all live our lives superficially.

To follow Christ more closely, means making difficult decisions not only in our lives but with our lives. A serious relationship with Christ includes not just the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, but also with his Body, the Church. Our relationship extends to everyone present here today. "Paul, Paul, why do you persecute me?" Paul eventually realized that he was persecuting the Church, the Body of Christ present here today in our Faith Community but also extending to the future Church of those who may one day be baptized into this corporate Body of Christ. That is the purpose of the Eucharist that we celebrate today, a constant reminder of who we are, especially when we leave this celebration and move out into the world to Christ in other we meet today.