



24th Ordinary Sunday B

John had such a rare heart condition that he could not handle good news or bad news. He could not get overly excited or overly sad because either would give him a heart attack.

Then it happened that he won a lottery for \$50 million. His wife, who got the news, did not know how to pass on this very exciting news to him. So she hired her friend, a clinical psychologist, to convey the good news to her husband.

The psychologist came to their home for a “casual visit” and, during their conversation, asked John, “What if you won a lottery for a thousand dollars? What would you do with it?” John said, “I would pay off my credit card bills.” Then she asked, “What if you won \$10 thousand dollars?” John said, “That would be a good down payment for a new car.” Then the psychologist asked, “What if you won \$50 million dollars?” The man thought about it and said, “I would keep half for myself, and give you the other half.” The psychologist had a heart attack!

Today’s Gospel passage is a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. So far, he had been in Galilee. Now he was making his way to Jerusalem. His eyes are set on Jerusalem where he will face the cross. On his way, he asks his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” His disciples said, “Some people say that you are John the Baptist, others Elijah, or one of the prophets.” This was the public opinion about Jesus. But, Jesus was not any of those. So again he asked his disciples, “Who do

YOU say that I am?” Peter spoke up, “You are the Christ.” This was a response that came from his personal faith. We see that the response goes from opinion to faith. Jesus asks the same question of all of us. It is a personal question. Who is Jesus for you? Does your response come from public opinion or personal faith? The quality of your discipleship depends on this answer.

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. Why? Because he knew the public was not ready for that news yet. Even his disciples were not ready for the mission of the Messiah. Most people thought that the Messiah would be a powerful king who would establish an earthly kingdom. But, the true Messiah is a suffering servant, as described by Isaiah in the first reading of today.

Then Jesus explained to his disciples of his upcoming suffering and death in Jerusalem. That shocked them because suffering and death were not in the “equation” of their understanding of the Messiah. So, we find Peter rebuking Jesus for that.

Then Jesus admonishes Peter by saying, “Get behind me, Satan!” Peter, in today’s Gospel, is an example of how even a godly and spiritual person could be manipulated by Satan in order to stand against the will of God. Jesus recognized the voice of the Father when Peter acknowledged him as the Christ, the son of God.

But, Jesus also recognized the voice of Satan when Peter rebuked Jesus for speaking about suffering, the cross, and death. Satan used Peter to tempt Jesus to avoid the cross. Sometimes the devil can use others who are very close to us to stand against God’s will. We have to be careful in discerning the voice of God. Any voice that prompts us to avoid the suffering, to avoid the cross, or to question the cross is a voice that comes from the devil.

The cross has an integral place in the life of a Christian. We have a feast to exclusively celebrate the cross—the exultation of the Holy Cross that we will be celebrating on Tuesday of this week. Then on Wednesday, we will celebrate the sorrows of our Blessed Mother Mary—a woman who bore many sufferings in her life which she did not understand and yet was always steadfast in her faith.

Only if we carry our own daily crosses can we be true disciples of Jesus. May this Eucharist that we celebrate strengthen us to be better disciples by picking up our crosses and following him.