

For Sunday, June 19, 2016

## A Lesson We Were Not Prepared For

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/061916.cfm>

Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1

Galatians 3:26-29

Luke 9:18-24

It was my first day as a college student. Arriving at an Introduction to Education course, we found a chair placed in the middle of the room, facing the student desks. The professor asked one student to sit in the chair, facing the rest of us, and she was given a mirror. She was told to address the person in the mirror, to express whatever she wanted to say to herself, aloud, with the class watching and listening. Then, one by one, each of us were called forward. As a painfully shy seventeen-year-old, this was almost more than I could manage. I remember thinking to myself, “What is her point?” After all of us had gone through the exercise, the professor explained. “You cannot hope to teach anyone anything unless you know yourself, are comfortable in your own skin, are prepared to be yourself in the presence of others.” This was a lesson I had not expected to learn—I can admit now that I did not really want to learn the lesson then, but fully grasp the professor’s wisdom now. This was for me, and I imagine for many of the other students, the real beginning of education. We began to learn what it means to be a person.



The apostles in Sunday’s Gospel were presented with a lesson for which they were not prepared. They had followed Jesus from town to town; they had witnessed miraculous healings, heard his teaching, and had come to believe that he is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. Now, at the very moment in which Peter voiced their conviction about his identity, Jesus directed them not to tell anyone what they have come to understand. Not only this, he told them he will be rejected, suffer, die, and rise—what must they have thought? They might have wondered, “What is his point?” This is not the sort of life they had envisioned as disciples of the Messiah! There is more. Jesus told them, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Jesus understands the inner conversion of heart and spirit the apostles must embrace in order to be his disciples in the world. He has predicted his own suffering and death, which the apostles cannot possibly yet grasp. He is asking them to change their expectations—the Messiah is not a temporal king who will overturn Roman rule. The Messiah is the One who shows us how to abandon false notions of power and control, lose our lives to God’s will, and love beyond our limited human imagination.

We deny ourselves when we fall into negative behavioral patterns, denying our self-worth and failing to recognize the impact of such behavior on others. This is not the sort of self-denial Jesus commands. Jesus’

call to self-denial is the call to humbly give our lives to God, trusting that all will be well. Paul's Letter to the Galatians underlines the change of mind and heart that results from this trusting faith. In Christ, there is no room for division or prejudice due to ethnic origin, social status, or gender. Those who are clothed with Christ are to be unified in mission as children of God. This is a lesson we may not be ready to learn, yet must. The lesson is twofold: First, we must pray for an open mind and heart, that we may be conformed to Christ's way of humble fulfillment of the Father's loving will. To "deny yourself" will require each of us to some specific movement of human and spiritual growth, which is in itself a lifelong process of ongoing conversion.

Secondly, we take up our own crosses, the daily deaths, burdens, and struggles that we bear, while standing in solidarity with those whose crosses are greater than our own. This weekend, we learned again a lesson that none of us wants to learn. Violence and terror are again on our minds; images of grieving families again fill media; our hearts hurt for the victims and their families, and wonder what our Christian response must be. We take up the cross with all who are hurting through the senseless violence and terror, knowing this is one act among many. The [statements of Pope Francis and Archbishop Kurtz](#) (president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) voice our solidarity with all who suffer in Orlando. [Archbishop Cupich of Chicago](#) calls us to act as Christ's people in the world, seeking the end to such senseless violence. Whether in the relatively mundane aspects of daily life, or in the larger moments of challenge in acting faithfully as a person in the world, we must be true to our master teacher, Jesus, the Christ of God. And what is Jesus' "point" for our lives? "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

*Leisa Anslinger*

## PRAYER

**O Lord,  
give us a mind  
that is humble, quiet, peaceable,  
patient, and charitable,  
and a taste of your Holy Spirit  
in all our thoughts, words, and deeds.**

**O Lord,  
give us a lively faith, a firm hope,  
a fervent charity, a love of you.**

**Take from us all lukewarmness in meditation  
and all dullness in prayer.  
Give us fervor and delight in thinking of you,  
your grace, and your tender compassion toward us.**

**Give us, good Lord,  
the grace to work for  
the things we pray for.**

—*St. Thomas More*

# NOTICES

## REMEMBERING OUR BROTHERS & SISTERS IN ORLANDO

In light of the tragic events that took place in Orlando, Liturgical Publications is making available free artwork to encourage parishioners to remember in prayer all those affected. LPi customers can find the artwork on the Art & Media Portal. If you do not print your bulletin with LPi, click [here](#).

## PETER'S PENCE COLLECTION

Many dioceses will take up the annual Peter's Pence collection to support the charitable work of the Holy Father on the weekend of June 25-26. The USCCB offers parish resources on its website [here](#).

## FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The theme of this year's Fortnight for Freedom is Witnesses to Freedom. Each year dioceses around the country arrange special events to highlight the importance of defending religious freedom. The Fortnight for Freedom is from June 21—the vigil of the feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More—to July 4, Independence Day. For more information and resources for your parish, click [here](#).

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