

**July 2, 2023**  
**Cycle A – 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

Psalm: 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Matthew 10:37-42

**Notes from Bishop Peter**

1. Saint Paul says of Christians, “We too have the mind of Christ.” Thus, we have the capacity to see the world, our contemporary society and even God through the mind and eyes of Jesus himself and also to live as Jesus would.
2. This begins with Baptism. Today’s second reading is from Romans 6:3-11.) It is a baptismal instruction that Paul inserts in his letter to the Romans.
  - a. Imagine a baptism you have attended. The priest or deacon pours water over the person’s forehead and says, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (From Matthew 28)
  - b. One of my most memorable baptismal experiences took place in the maximum security prison in Somers, CT. During Mass with a large congregation of Spanish-speaking men, they with one voice told the two candidates that they were their brothers. After the ceremony, I told them that Jesus had forgiven all their past sins and that they would now live in newness of life. These two tough men wept openly for joy because of Jesus’ loving forgiveness and that they were accepted into the Christian community represented by the other inmates.
3. Through baptism, the new Christians are transformed by the powerful presence of the Most Blessed Trinity in them giving them the power to be “other Christs.” This is expressed in the anointing with holy Chrism the newly baptized receive. Chrism comes from Greek and means “Christ,” since Jesus was “anointed” by the Holy Spirit.
4. Clearly, children who are baptized need the support of their families and parishes and must be instructed so they can progressively understand who they are. **Unfortunately there are many children and young people who were baptized but have no idea of what the sacrament should mean and do in their lives.**
5. Jesus tells his followers that to live as true disciples is not easy. We must take up our cross each day and follow him.

a. Notice that he never tells us to do what he himself has not done before us.

b. What does this mean for us?

- The absolute need of the painful virtue of humility – the ability to face ourselves and make a serious examination of conscience about our feelings toward people of other races.
- In this context, racism – the inclination to see others as inferior to ourselves. From this warped framework, people jeer at others, call them demeaning names and treat them below their dignity as human beings. Racism impels people to fear those who are different. It is often irrational and must be confronted.
- The Cain and Able attitude – I must feel superior to others. This gives me license to put them down and even inflict pain on them. Thus, the wound in my soul impels me to feel superior if I can see myself better than others.
- For instance, the Jim Crow laws in the south of our country following Emancipation. Why did white people do such despicable things – and many who created these laws, lived and profited by them were BAPTIZED and without hesitation called themselves Christians = followers of Jesus Christ!

6. Jesus warns his disciples” Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

a. Those who help others even when it’s difficult to do so. Military heroes who put their lives ahead of their own... A father who enters a burning home to rescue his 8 year-old daughter.

7. Lastly, we are called to represent Christ, meaning to make him present by the way we take seriously who we are and live accordingly. At times this involves living and confronting the dominant culture that is contrary to the teachings and life of Jesus Christ – case in point – institutional racism and those who, like Martin Luther King, Jr., helped people to see this as evil.

8. Yes, it is possible to live up to the demands Jesus makes on us for as St. Paul says, “I can do all things with Christ who makes me strong.” (Philippians 4:13)

***Amen.***