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## 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

August 30, 2020

“God forbid, Lord! No such thing will ever happen to you.” (Matthew 16:22)

Jeremiah 20: 7-9

Psalm 63

Romans 12: 1-2

Matthew 16: 21-27

This past month we have been hearing a lot about St. Peter in our Gospels; on Aug. 6<sup>th</sup> we celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration when Peter, James and John went up the mountain with Jesus and Jesus was transfigured before them. 3 Sundays ago we heard the Gospel of the apostles in a boat during a storm and Jesus walking on the water and Jesus inviting Peter to join him in walking on the water and Peter begins to walk and then becomes fearful and begins to sink and Jesus lifts him up on the water. Peter doubted the power of Jesus. Last week we heard Jesus give Peter the name Peter. He was named Simon and Jesus calls him Peter, Rock, and tells Peter he will be the foundation stone of the Church. Jesus said, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it; I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.” And in today’s Gospel again we hear that Peter will not accept the fact that Jesus will suffer and die and be crucified and then rise on the third day. We know how later the night of the Last Supper Peter will deny Jesus three times during the trial of Jesus. Back and forth; Peter professes his faith and belief in Jesus and then hesitates, becomes fearful and even denies Jesus. But in the end, Peter goes to Rome preaching the name of Jesus and is himself crucified because of his belief in Jesus.

As Catholics we oftentimes look to the saints not only for help or for their intercession but also as examples. We have been called to be saints and Jesus has even called us to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Our heavenly Father is God, and we realize we are not God, we will never be perfect as God is perfect. We will not even be angels. But we look to the saints, human beings, and try to imitate them or perhaps get some hints as to how they achieved sanctity.

There is a very interesting book, I am re-reading it for the 4<sup>th</sup> time, since it was so packed with helpful thoughts, I couldn’t absorb it all the first 3 times. But the book is entitled, “The Spirituality of Imperfection, Storytelling and the Search for Meaning.” The book was originally written for alcoholics and I know a doctor who counsels alcoholics and he was giving a retreat to AA members and wanted my opinion on the book since he was basing his talks on the book. Basically, the book describes ourselves as human beings and growing in acceptance of the fact that we are imperfect, and we will always have to accept ourselves and others as imperfect. The saints too were imperfect. They were human beings and grew and strove for perfection, realizing they would never be completely and totally perfect. Nonetheless we must never become discouraged or give up hope of achieving sanctity.

Recently, with all the rioting in our cities, there have been movements in our country to destroy statues of people who have been declared saints in our Church, pointing out mistakes these individuals might have made. A statue of St. Junipero Serra was torn down a few weeks ago in San Francisco, because

some felt he was disrespectful to the Indians of California. St. Junipero Serra loved the Indians, he did everything he could to protect the Indians from the Spanish soldiers. He sometimes made mistakes in punishing the Indians, but he knew if he didn't the soldiers would be even more severe in their punishments. He fed, clothed, and housed the indigenous peoples, he set up schools and taught them trades. He once walked from California to Mexico City to speak to the Spanish leader of the New World in order to protect the Indians from the local military. He did what he thought best.

In St. Louis, there is a movement led by a reactionary Muslim group to remove statues of St. Louis IX and even to change the name of the city. The reason given is that St. Louis led a crusade against the Muslims. St. Louis was following the plea of the Pope to retrieve the Holy Land and the places where Jesus lived and preached, died and rose, from the Muslims who had captured these places from the Christians, 800 years after Christ and Christianity. St. Louis was the king of France, he fed the poor, washed the sick and nursed them, he was a holy man, but because of the crusade, people today want to destroy all memory of him. He is a saint and he did what he thought was the right thing to do. Perhaps he was not perfect; he was a human being.

Today we again hear of St. Peter, an apostle, the foundation stone of the Church, chosen by Jesus, and a human being, who was not perfect. In our Gospel we see that Peter is trying to change the divine plan, he is trying to discourage Jesus from going to Jerusalem to suffer and die, he is tempting Jesus. And Jesus rebukes him. Peter was not perfect, but with the grace of the Holy Spirit he grows into being the first of the Apostles and the foundation of the Church. He was not perfect. He was human, but like all the saints he cooperated with grace and became a saint.

So too ourselves. We must not become discouraged when we fail, when we sin, when we realize our frailty as human beings. We continue to strive for perfection which we will never fully achieve in this life. But it is the struggle, the prayer, the good works, which will eventually bring us to eternal happiness with Jesus, and with Peter and all the saints in heaven.