

Come and Die

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

June 28, 2026

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While on our recent Parish Pilgrimage, one of the key points made to us about the city of Rome was that it is the city of Sts. Peter and Paul. Both of them have large basilicas in their honor as well as many statues throughout the city bearing their images. This coming Monday, June 29, the Church will celebrate their joint feast day. While it certainly is a day of joyful celebration for the Roman Catholic Church, another key point made about them to us on our pilgrimage was that they were both killed for the faith. This puts their celebration in a more sobering light. Peter, the one who denied Jesus three times, was humbly crucified upside down and Paul, the one who once persecuted followers of Jesus, was swiftly beheaded by a sword.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "whoever does not take up their cross and follow after me is not worthy of me... and whoever loses their life will find it." In this teaching, Jesus reminds his followers, including us today, that discipleship costs something. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the one who famously preached 'the cost of discipleship,' once said, "when Christ calls a person, he bids them come and die." While this sounds morbid and we must never

glorify suffering or cause others to suffer, we know that there is truth in it. Discipleship involves a lot of losing.

Most of us will thankfully never experience martyrdom like Sts. Peter and Paul. Yet, all of us who are baptized will experience death not just at the end of our lives, but multiple times throughout our lives. As St. Paul asked the Romans in our Second Reading, “are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” Being baptized into his death means that we allow ourselves to enter into the drama of life, including the suffering. This suffering could be the death of a loved one, a serious medical issue, or a failed marriage, to name a few examples. Perhaps the sign of really being baptized into the death of Christ Jesus in these moments is whenever we think back over the challenges we’ve been through and say that if we had to do it all over, we wouldn’t change a thing. This is not because we liked what happened to us, but because our experiences have become part of our story. They have helped us learn how to give up control and readjust our priorities. If we stick with them long enough, all of our experiences can teach us that in every curse there is also a blessing if we are open to it. Even St. Josephine Bakhita, our patron who experienced horrible treatment in her early life, would not have it any other way. She once said if it weren’t for her captors, she would not have become a Christian or a religious woman. For this reason, she would kiss their hands and forgive them.

Each of us must decide for ourselves how to incorporate death into our lives in order to be faithful to our baptismal call.

What are some of the unpleasant things I have gone through in life that I would not change if I had to go back and do it again? How have I found liberation by going through the challenges of life and coming out stronger?

As we continue with this mass, let us not be afraid of being baptized into the death of Christ Jesus, like Sts. Peter and Paul. For Christians, death, whether literal or figurative, is never the end. This is why 'when Christ calls a person, he bids them come and die.' Something new is about to be born.