

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 30, 2026

Brother and sisters, today I would like to talk to you about the cost of discipleship. True Christian discipleship requires sacrificial commitment to Christ, even when that commitment brings suffering. You see that in the first reading today when the prophet is trying to stop it and God won't let him and he keeps suffering.

Now, some people will mistake what Christ is talking about of what the cross their life is, and others, out of fear, neglect or indifference, refuse to pick up their cross.

There is a distinction between the ordinary hardships of life, and the cross Jesus is speaking about that we must pick up daily. The cross does not refer to our afflictions like arthritis or indigestion or any more serious medical conditions. Nor does it apply to inconveniences or difficulties, especially a difficult relationship, at least not in the first place. These things are what come to us in spite of ourselves, it happens in everyday life. The cross that Christ is talking about means the suffering which comes into our lives because of the choices we have made to stand up for the Gospel message. Like Jeremiah speaking on the Lord's behalf. This is the suffering that comes from choosing to follow his truth, his justice, his mercy, and his commandments out of love for our Lord, and concern for the salvation of souls. This is the cross that we bear for choosing to be a faithful Catholic in season and out. Importantly, the love I am talking about here is

not merely a warm, fuzzy feeling that you get with people where attachments or desires or camaraderie's that we share with groups. Love is sacrificial.

Love is to will the good of the other, and the ultimate good is union with Jesus Christ now, in this life and for all eternity. The cross Jesus is speaking of is a cross some people refuse to pick up. The cost of being a Christian. Healthcare workers, for example, include the suffering that comes for standing up for the life of the unwanted child in a womb. Or protecting the child who society is trying to medically, and or surgically transform to feed an ideology, which often leads to lasting permanent damage.

The cross of being a Christian educator includes the suffering that comes from teaching, which is not merely a human construct, but is ultimately revealed in the persons of Jesus Christ. In seeking his truth, we come to know our heavenly Father and follow the way home to eternal life. The cross of a Catholic educator also includes the courage to advocate for parents' rights, respecting and supporting them as the primary educator of their children.

Now, the cross of being a parent includes the suffering that comes from forming children in the faith and helping them to live it out in a world that often opposes it. This includes teaching by word and example that God comes first. Worshipping him every

Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Not simply when it is convenient. This also includes accepting the criticism, sacrifice, and heartaches that can come from raising children according to the Gospel, rather than according to the spirit of the present age.

And the cross of being a Catholic includes the suffering that comes from living out the faith. Saving the marital act in one's marriage, remaining faithful to one's marriage vows, rejecting no hope divorces, and defending the permanence of marriage. In the Gospel of Jesus asks for no less commitment from his followers. *“If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, he must renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

For the Christian, living on the truth of Jesus Christ requires commitment. Consequently, suffering on some level is almost a certainty.

There are two extremes that Christians are to avoid. One seeks only self-fulfillment and rejects Christ's call to take up the cross. The other focus is only on denial and sacrifice, forgetting that we are also called to seek the good that God intends for each of us. The virtue lies between two extremes. The Christian is called neither to selfishness or self-neglect but to sacrificial love, rooted in proper understanding and human dignity.

The cross is a metaphor for sacrificial love. It has a hard drink to it, and at times requires discipline, hardship, pain, and for some, even martyrdom. Yet there is no achievement without sacrifice. More importantly, sacrifice can bring out the best in us. The world-class athlete, the learned professional, the skilled tradesmen, and especially the loving parent, all understand the truth. They know that love always costs something. The greater the love, the greater the willingness to sacrifice.

Our Lord and Savior out of love for his people and in perfect obedience to the Father's will carried his cross and endured immeasurable suffering. Jesus chose the way of self-sacrifice and suffering. It wasn't that he loved suffering, no, it was because Christ loves God that he suffered. Through his suffering and resurrection, our Lord entered into the glory and won salvation for those who will follow him. Those who will pick up their cross and carry it. Jesus promised that those who do follow him faithfully here will share in his glory, in heaven, for all eternity.