TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Peter has barely finished proclaiming Jesus as the Christ when he begins resisting the way Jesus intends to fulfill His mission. In last Sunday's gospel, Peter is praised for recognizing who Jesus is. This Sunday, he hears that Jesus must suffer, be killed, and rise again. Peter pulls Him aside and objects. He wants the Messiah, but he does not want the cross (Matthew 16:21–27). That tension is familiar in recovery. We can sincerely desire a new life while resisting the sacrifices through which that life becomes possible.

Jesus responds firmly to Peter, then tells the disciples, *"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24). These words can be misunderstood. Denying ourselves does not mean despising ourselves, ignoring legitimate needs, or believing suffering is good for its own sake. Taking up our cross does not require remaining in an abusive or dangerous situation. Jesus is calling us to surrender whatever keeps us from following Him freely.

The cross of recovery is usually concrete. It can mean telling the truth when hiding feels safer, accepting consequences we would rather avoid, making amends without controlling the response, or sitting with discomfort instead of reaching for an old escape. It may involve receiving correction, changing routines, ending relationships that support addiction, or continuing healthy practices when the excitement of early recovery has faded. None of these choices feels easy. The discomfort we feel can be evidence that familiar patterns are losing their authority. Yet each one weakens the hold of the old life.

Like Peter, we may want resurrection without surrender. We want peace without honest inventory, restored trust without consistent action, and freedom without releasing the habits that once offered comfort. Jesus does not shame us for struggling with the cost. He does, however, tell us the truth: *"Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"* (Matthew 16:25).

Saint Paul gives this surrender a practical shape in the second reading. He urges us to *"offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God"* and to *"be transformed by the renewal of your mind"* (Romans 12:1–2). Recovery is not only an interior intention. We offer God our bodies, time, attention, speech, money, relationships, and daily routines. Step Three becomes real through these ordinary decisions. Turning our will and our lives over to God is renewed each time we choose His direction over the demands of fear, appetite, pride, or resentment.

The first reading acknowledges that fidelity can feel costly. Jeremiah tries to remain silent because speaking God's word has brought him ridicule and pain. Still, the word becomes *"like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones"* (Jeremiah 20:9). Once truth has awakened us, returning comfortably to denial becomes difficult. We may feel weary of the work recovery requires, but we also know what the old life costs.

The cross is not evidence that recovery has failed. At times, it is the place where our old ways of living are giving way to freedom. We do not carry it alone. Christ has already walked this road, and He remains beside us through every surrender.

Following Jesus will cost us something, but addiction costs far more. As we release the life built on secrecy, control, self-protection, and immediate relief, Christ leads us toward the life we were created to receive. The sacrifices of recovery are not empty losses. In His hands, they become the path toward freedom, integrity, and resurrection.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which sacrifice or act of surrender in recovery are you resisting because it feels too costly?
- Where do you still hope for freedom without accepting the discomfort or responsibility that change requires?
- How might Christ be asking you to take up your cross, and whose support do you need to do so faithfully?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Jeremiah 20:7-9
RESP. PS. Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9
SECOND READING Romans 12:1-2
GOSPEL Matthew 16:21-27

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