

This is NOT a true story

A man falls off of a cliff and manages to grab onto a branch which prevented him from falling to his death

Another person happens to look over the edge and see him there - he drops a rope to rescue him - the guy responds to the nice gesture by saying, "Thanks, but no thanks. I know God will save me."

After a little while longer a helicopter happens to see him - they shout down to him to grab onto a rope ladder that they will throw down to him - again, he thanks them, but he is confident that God will save him from his situation

Finally, right before he runs out of strength to hang on, a hot air balloon happens to come close enough that he could just let go and fall in - but again, he refuses the help, confident that God will save him

Well, he falls to his death - afterwards he asks God, "Why didn't you save me? I trusted you and you let me down." - God responded, "I sent a guy with a rope, a helicopter, and a hot air balloon to save you. What more do you expect me to do?"

God is our help - sometimes we just don't recognize His help - we are so caught up in solving our problems our way that we miss seeing God's solution - God does uphold us

Sometimes we miss God altogether

This happened to many of the people in Israel at the time Jesus walked the face of the earth; especially among the chief priests and the scribes, the leaders of the people

So in the Gospel, Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" - They respond by saying, "John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the other Old Testament prophets."

Jesus they asks them, "Who do YOU say that I am?"

Peter, the impulsive leader that he is, replies, "You are the Christ."

Jesus tells him he is right - and Peter is - Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Savior of the World

But who do YOU say that I am?

How do we picture Jesus? How do we picture God? - Do we see Him as a tyrant who is going to punish us for any wrong thing we do? Do we see Him as an unloving God who just set the universe in motion and doesn't care about His creation enough to take an ongoing active role in what happens?

Or do we see God as a loving God? One who loves us so much that He was willing to die for us so that our sins can be forgiven, so that we can spend eternity with Him in heaven if we so choose

The disciples did not see Jesus this way - they thought He was going to establish an earthly kingdom - they thought He was going to restore the Israeli nation to its former glory

Instead Jesus talks about what being the Christ is all about - He tells them he is going to be rejected, die, and rise on the third day - this is what being the Christ entails

Peter, the same Peter who has just declared Jesus to be the Christ, rebukes Jesus - Jesus says, "Get behind me Satan." You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

Who must see Jesus for who He is - not who we think He is

So many Christians do this - we want to make Jesus in our image - we pick and choose which of Jesus' teachings to believe in - when we do this, this becomes Bethism or Father Vogelism, but it is not Christianity

We believe and trust that God has preserved the Catholic Church to teach the truth in matters of faith and morals

It is not easy to follow the teachings of Christ, the teachings of the Catholic Church

But Jesus says, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."

But this doesn't sound like much fun - someone said to me this week we need to stress the joy of being a Catholic Christian and stress less the sacrifices of being a Christian

I kind of agree, but that is not what the readings give us - so here I am talking about sacrificing

Why is sacrificing so important? - One, it is what Jesus was about to save us

Then as His followers, we too need to sacrifice to point others to Christ as well

Another reason is faith is not enough

Yes, as Ephesians 2:8-9 says, we are saved by grace - faith in Jesus is a great thing - this is what connects us to saving grace to our salvation- but that grace has to be active in our lives - faith is not enough - faith has to change the way we live

St. James in the second reading asks, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"

He goes on to ask, "If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day."

What do we do? Do we tell them, "God is with. Go in peace." - This is easy to say - the hard part is do we do anything about their situation? - do we give them the necessities of life? - do we give them food? - do we give them clothing?

So our faith has to be alive in our lives

St. James says that faith is not enough

He says that if our faith does not have works, our faith is dead

St. James says, "You have faith and I have works. Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works."

So we too are called to have our faith alive in our lives...in our lives and our actions

This is how we show that we believe in Jesus

So that we sacrifice not just for God such as praising Him here at Mass, but do we also take time to sacrifice for one another during the rest of the week? - Do we share the gifts we have been given with those around us?

So yes it is great that we have a faith in Jesus - but then during this week, what is God calling us to do? How are we living that out? - what works come alive in our lives because of our faith in Jesus?