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Lent 2 Year B Homily
Father Civalier
February 28, 2021

“Let them . . . take up their cross. . .”

When Jesus said these words,

he wasn't just giving us a prescription for getting into heaven.

He was telling us how to live a superior life right here on earth.

You see, there's a high life that we can live right here, right now.

But to get in on it,

we have to lay down the way of life

that most of us are accustomed to.

We may have to let go of the very things

we've been trying so hard to latch onto.

We have to set our hearts instead on doing what God wants us to do.

That's what Jesus did.

He didn't live his life for himself.

He lived it completely for God.

He did only what the Father told him to do

and he lived in total victory.

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Discerning the will of God for our life is difficult,

not because it is being hidden from us by God,

but because we don't often spend much time listening to God.

We often pray with a full agenda.

We have so many people we want God to help,

we have so many concerns about the world,

we want our words to be right,

and so we heap phrase on phrase.

Nothing is wrong with the fact that we want to talk with God.

The problem comes when we decide to do all the talking

and leave no time for silence before God,

when he can communicate with us.

One year in Lent while I was Rector at Ascension,

we had the wonderful opportunity

to hear a presentation on Zen Buddhism,

and at the beginning of his presentation the Roshi,

led us in a directed meditation about the creation,

and the need for peace.

Stripped of all our usual Christian reference points,

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there was an incredible silence in the room,

as we needed to listen in order to understand

what spiritual direction the Roshi was taking us.

The incredible feeling in the midst of that silence is a reminder

of the riches that are available to us in meditation

– or just placing ourselves in silence before God.

The Roshi gave us a great gift in reminding us

of the importance of living in the moment that is now,

and in directing our attention to a spiritual quest.

We just don't give enough time to such spiritual pursuits.

But, sometimes the problem is that we are arrogant before God,

we know what is best for us,

and if God doesn't understand that,

then he'd better get on the stick.

Oh, we would never say it with words like that, would we?

But, we would mean the same thing.

When we turn off opportunities to be with his followers,

when we decide that we are just too busy to pray.

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We have all kinds of ways of using our time,

so that the message we give God is the same as what we won't say
in polite company.

But, the effect is the same,

and God does get the message.

The amazing thing is that he doesn't give up on us,

even when we turn away,
he is always seeking to draw us back to him.

But, just imagine how much more he could do

if we would just cooperate a little bit!

And there is another side to this;

just think how much better you would feel,
if you could be in better tune with God.

Each time we make the choice of "my will"

over "God's will", there are immediate consequences.

As we lose our connection with God,

we inevitably suffer stress-related illnesses, insomnia, anxiety,

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deterioration of personal relationships,
and a feeling of being depressed.

Eventually, we hit a brick wall.

Anger begins to mount in our life,
and eventually we realize it is more painful to do it our way
than to do it God's way.

We remember there is a solution and it involves opening our hands
and releasing control of all outcomes.

We pray once more for willingness to hear God's will
and the strength to carry it out.

Well, Lent is that opportunity for a tune-up with God,
or a realignment with God's will for our lives.

The way of God we find is to take up our cross
and follow him, into the way of suffering and death,
which will bring us to our resurrection with him.

We live the way of God not just to miss hell.

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Our purpose is to please God,

to lay down our lives in order to fulfill God's desires.

To be God's special possessions on the earth

and to do whatever we are told to do.

Our top priority is to give ourselves to God

and to live in communion with the Lord.

To spend enough time with God

so that we can hear the Divine voice and respond.

Only when we do that will we be genuinely fulfilled.

Only when we do that will be able to live the high life

we've been longing for.