

22nd Sun A – 2017 (September 2 – 3)

01. Jer 20:7 – 9; 02. Rom 12:1 – 2; 03. Mt 16: 21 – 27

My sisters and brothers,

We are still living with the Harvey hurricane disaster that hit Corpus Christi, Houston and the coastal areas of Texas which left many families homeless. This unwanted, least expected and the unwelcomed guest has left many people to go through suffering which they didn't want. The last couple of days I never moved away from the news without shedding tears and sincerely praying for them. In the midst of this natural calamity we have men and women who have stood up to be real heroes in rescuing those trapped in the flood. Emily, a mother of 21, posted this note: "Thank you for Risking Your Lives to save Ours." This note came after Emily and Philip, her husband of 24, a Texas couple, who attempted to drive to a safer location with their two kids of 18 and 4 months old when suddenly the truck went sideways and spun and flipped three times. Emily told in her interview that her main priority during the accident was her children. When the rescue team arrived, she said, "Give them (my children) life before you try to help me." Wow! She risked her chance of living for the sake of her little children.

The gospel reading for this weekend is the continuation of last weekend. There Jesus asked his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." What a perfect answer! In reply, Jesus revealed that Simon's profession of faith was the result of a direct revelation from the Father. Jesus then began to unfold his mission that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.

Peter didn't understand much meaning in Jesus' suffering, much less his death. He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." Peter's words were very consoling, supportive, and strengthening but Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me." If you remember right, this was the same response that Jesus gave Satan during his third temptation in the 4th chapter. A very powerful scene with a strong message. Jesus' choice of words at this point are very strong and therefore the evangelist conveys a very important message for us to consider.

Get Behind Me, Satan! Jesus' rebuke comes to St. Peter just after he declared Jesus as the Son of God. This scene probably was the most

unexpected for Peter and his friends. More than a moment of shame, it was a shock that left the apostles to reevaluate their thoughts. This embarrassment taught Simon that he had much to learn with even more embarrassing events yet to come into his life.

The only reason that Jesus gives Peter for his rebuke is: "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." Is that a good reason for Jesus to tell us: Get behind me, Satan! We will probably end up hearing this from Jesus all too often for our thoughts are mostly human, very human.

Why did Jesus use such strong words to rebuke Peter? Let us look at it again. Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me." Peter at this point is an obstacle to Jesus' mission. Jesus is on a mission to save us. He sees his children trapped in sin and perishing. He does not permit any obstacle to come his way to destroy the mission entrusted to him by the Father. He wants to save them. He is not only risking his life but giving it up to save us. No wonder why we cannot but love Jesus. No wonder why not only love him but give our lives for Him who loved us so much. No wonder why we want to give up sin for the sake of Jesus who gave his all for the sake of saving us from sin. There is no parallel to measure His love for us. Like Emily in Texas, we can say, "Thank you, Jesus for giving your life to save mine."