

HOMILY – 12TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR 2016

Father George was opening his mail one morning. Taking a single sheet of paper from an envelope, he found written on it only one word: 'Fool'.

The following Sunday, in church, Father George announced to the assembled congregation, 'I have known many people who have written letters to me and forgotten to sign their names. But this week I received a letter from someone who signed his name and had forgotten to write a letter.'

Today's Gospel outlines the three requirements of Christian discipleship, namely, "denying oneself, taking up one's cross and following Jesus".

Once a teen-age daughter we call her 'Teena', rang her mum from her school during the lunch break and asked 'Mum, what's your strength? Or what really makes you strong mother?' This was the question 'what makes your mother a strong Mum' that her teacher asked in her class as their assignment. Mum thought for a moment and said, 'Teena, it is my ability to say certain Nos to myself, though I love them in my personal life, for your wellbeing and of your dad and our family. Is this not a self-denial? What makes a person a strong Father or parents in general? *Is it not their self-denial for the sake of their children, wife or husband?* All those put the welfare and happiness of others as their first priority, are denying themselves and have completed the first step to the requirement of Jesus' discipleship.

I read this story about a husband who came home from church and looked for his wife. When he saw her at the kitchen, he suddenly lifted her and carried her around. The wife was startled and said, "Why did you do that? Did the priest tell you to be romantic?" The husband replied: "No. He told me to carry my cross!" *It could be the other way around – the wife's cross also is the husband.* As you get home after today's Mass don't try to lift up your husband or wife, especially if your back is not that good, even though they are your crosses!!!

Crosses come in different forms like: *the difficulty to support your children to school, the patience to bear sickness and bodily pains, the commitment to live marriage vows faithfully, the ability to forgive erring members of the family, the struggle to be honest with our work, the sincerity to observe religious life, financial problem, a nagging arthritis or lingering illness, the inconveniences and anguish of relatives taking care of a paralyzed son or a bedridden grandparent, and many others.* The list of human sufferings is endless.

However, it is human tendency to turn away from awful situations. Muhammed Ali, the Boxing Phenom said, *'I hated every minute of my training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a **champion**'.* And he really did!

When we run away from our crosses and challenges, actually we are incapacitating ourselves from our ability to face any adverse and unfamiliar situations. It is our hardships that shape us what we are. It is challenges makes stronger. It is our willingness to face our crosses makes us courageous and confident.

There is nothing as bad as we think. It is darkness which gives us contrast to the light, otherwise how would we appreciate the light? It is because of flat ground and down slope we enjoy height of a hill or a viewpoint. It is the ill health and sickness help us to appreciate a strong mind and body. So everything is relatively good and they become good as we understand them. It is so crucial to understand these life principles and realities to take up our own crosses **happily**. Any suffering is a hell without the proper understanding of its purpose.

As disciples of Jesus, we learn to trust in Jesus and we surrender our lives for his guidance and providence. Let us make sure that we deny ourselves for the coming of His kingdom, we take up our own crosses with better understanding of its purposes, and we follow Jesus by loving one another as he taught us.