



## A COSTLY *Discipleship*

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**"G**et behind me, Satan!" We remember very well this rebuke, don't we? It is almost incredible how Peter, from being the one who solemnly recognizes Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, on the way to Caesarea Philippi, ends up being rebuked as "Satan," as somebody opposing the mission of the Son of Man. But what looks crucial is the first part of this rebuke: "Get behind me!" which means, "Come back, follow me!" Today's readings reveal to us something profound concerning Jesus and our desire to follow him. He is the Christ indeed, and yet, he is the Son of God in a deeply different way from what we usually expect.

In the First Reading, we see the title taken from one of Isaiah's songs of the "Suffering Servant." Jesus has been identified with this mysterious character. He gave his

back to those beating him. He did not shield his face from buffets and spitting, setting his face like flint.

Following Christ is demanding. The discipleship has a "cost," it is not a "cheap" grace, as German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer used to say. To follow Christ means to tread the same path he has trodden, as today's Gospel reminds us: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." We are called to see that Jesus can appear to us as the Christ, as the Savior, only if we are able to look for him even in our wounds, in our sins and shortcomings. In other words, in our daily crosses which, with him, become the source of Life.

In the Letter of James (Second Reading), we are reminded that our Faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior, must always

be accompanied by our "works," and particularly not only by taking up our own crosses but helping others (especially the poor and the needy) to carry theirs. This is what it means to follow Jesus and to recognize Him as the Messiah and the Savior.

Discipleship is not only on us: we are assured that we are not alone in this pilgrimage. As the First Reading reminds us, the Lord is near; the Lord is our help. He will never desert us in our personal way of the cross. As today we also celebrate Catechist's Sunday, let us realize how important it is to help our brothers and sisters to grow this ability to see God not only in their joys and successes but also in their deepest wounds and failures. Only in this way shall we recognize Jesus as our true Savior and celebrate our Life in him even in our daily crosses.