

**What does it mean to you to be a follower of Jesus Christ?**

**How we do this is as varied as the number of people in the world**

**Then there is the vocation we have**

**Married, single**

**Priesthood, religious, consecrated**

**And we all have our particular professions as well**

**Lawyers, doctors, administrators, students**

**Farmers, plumbers, businessmen and women**

**There are hermits and cloisters**

**The list is almost endless**

**But we have to ask:**

**First and foremost, *am I a follower of Jesus?***

**Or am I this or that who happens to be a follower of Jesus?**

**Am I an American Catholic?**

**Or am I a Catholic American?**

**Am I a Doctor or lawyer or whatever who happens to be a Catholic?**

**Am I a Catholic who happens to be in business or a student?**

**How we answer and live this question is critically important**

**We are called to be Catholic Christians first**

**How we live that is secondary**

**This is not easy**

**But it has never been easy to follow God**

**Not before Christ**

**Not when he walked this earth**

**And not today**

**And if we find our Christian life a comfortable life**

**We are very likely duping ourselves**

**And not in a good way**

**We hear Jeremiah complaining in our first reading**

**He claims he had been duped or enticed by God**

**God had promised to be with him**

**And Jeremiah believed him**

**But God didn't tell him the rest of the story**

**God was with him**

**But not in the way Jeremiah wished**

**Jeremiah found following God a difficult life**

**God had a special mission for Jeremiah**

**One that Jeremiah didn't much desire**

**So he finds himself complaining to God**

**He did not seek to be a prophet**

**He resisted it from the start**

**But he was given this call**

**To deliver God's message to the people of Israel**

**It was a message of destruction to his own people**

**Then he is mocked by those he was trying to warn**

**And when he is faithful, he receives no comfort from God**

**So he decides, no more**

***I will never speak in God's name again***

**But then the silence burns him up from inside**

**He cannot help it**

**He takes on the prophet's role**

**Delivering God's message**

**And suffering for being faithful**

**For Jeremiah, following God was not an easy life**

**For Peter, being a follower of Jesus was not easy**

**Our Gospel today follows immediately from last weeks**

**Last week, Jesus called Peter Rock**

***I will build my Church upon this Rock***

***And the gates of hell will not prevail against it***

**Then he gave Peter the keys**

**What you hold bound on earth will be bound in heaven**

**What you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven**

**And like Jeremiah, Peter took him at his word**

**Then Jesus begins to tell his followers about his coming persecution**

**His death at the hands of the chief priests and scribes of Israel**

**Peter, thinking he is special, takes Jesus aside**

**Pulls him away from the others**

**Lord, forbid this should happen**

**And now we hear some of the harshest words Jesus speaks**

***Get behind me Satan***

**Jesus is telling Peter that he is being an obstacle to God's plan**

**Peter was thinking as humans think**

**But God's ways are not man's ways**

**Another thing Peter had mixed up**

**He is called to be a follower of Jesus**

**Even if he is blessed by God**

**Even if his is the Rock, the foundation**

**Even if he has the keys to the kingdom**

**It is Jesus' kingdom**

**Peter is thinking he is the leader**

**And he wants Jesus to follow him**

**To do as Peter wishes**

**It is not easy to be a Christian in today's world**

**Peter gives us something I think we can all identify with**

**Why would God allow earthquakes, tornados or hurricanes?**

**Why would God allow cancer, accidents or injuries?**

**Why would God take my parent when I need them the most?**

**Why would God allow this child to die?**

**Why; why; why???**

**Why would Jesus have to suffer?**

**If I were in charge, it would be this way or that way**

**There would be justice in the world**

**Justice as I see it**

**But God does have an answer, and he has a plan**

**And we all have a place, a mission in that plan**

**The heart of that mission is to be bearers of the divine love to the world**

**Jeremiah was sent to a world gone wrong**

**Jesus came into a world gone wrong**

**We live in a world gone wrong**

**But the cure is there**

**Jeremiah complains**

**Peter tries to rebuke Jesus**

**But Jesus shows us the path**

**It is not a comfortable Jesus of our imagination**

**It is not a pious Jesus**

**It is not the Jesus of popular Christian rock music**

**The Jesus Peter wanted to be with was the Jesus that fed the 5000**

**The Jesus that delivered possessed people**

**The Jesus that raised others from the dead**

**He did all these things**

**But the central aspect of Jesus' mission was his cross, death and resurrection**

**This is the Jesus we are called to follow**

**Not lead**

**He has led the way**

**He shows us divine love to a world gone wrong**

**And he invites us to walk with him, following him**

**Bringing divine love to the world**

**So whether our personal cross is emotional, financial or personal**

**We can try denying it**

**We can try rebelling against it**

**We can try complaining against it**

**We can try to numb ourselves with the power of the world**

**We can try to avoid it**

**Or we can do as Jesus tells us**

**Taking up our cross and following**

**What we choose will define us**

**And this brings us back to the question I opened with**

**What does it mean to me to be a follower of Jesus?**

**Am I a Catholic Christian first?**

**Or does my profession or my politics take priority?**

**Many paths lead to death and destruction**

**One leads through these things to true life**

**Eternal life**