

Fr. Rudy's Reflections  
The Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 15, 2024

### The Path to Eternal Life

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

As humans, we seem wired to pursue pleasure, honor, importance, money, and privilege, etc., as treasured ambitions. This relentless drive is deeply embedded in our psyches and culture that push us toward our self-centered goals. The Gospel reading for this Sunday, the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, however, invites us to reflect on a different path—one illuminated by Jesus Christ, who teaches us to restrain the ego's insatiable desire for comfort, recognition, and the path of least resistance and choose a different way of life.

Peter's magnificent confession of faith stands at the heart of today's Gospel. When Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" Peter boldly asserts that Jesus is "the Christ"—the divine Messiah of God. Peter's response indicates that he believes Jesus is not just another prophet or holy man; he recognizes his uniqueness among men. Yet, unfortunately, Peter still envisions Jesus as a traditional-type king who would liberate and lead Israelites to an earthly, self-defined kingdom.

Jesus reinterprets his Messianic status in a new and challenging way. He predicts he will be rejected, suffer, and die for mankind, and then rise again on the third day. This revelation confounds Peter, who cannot fathom that *his Lord*, the promised King, would endure such a fate. In his quiet rebuke of Jesus, Peter reveals his solely human perspective—one that equates the Messiah's role with power, triumph, and earthly glory. And Jesus's response is a crucial spiritual lesson for us all. He tells Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." This sharp rebuke underscores a pivotal truth about Christianity: the path to eternal life is not gained in a lifetime of egoism but through self-negation. In this realm, burdens can be soothed and hearts set aflame with love. Jesus invites Peter, and indeed all of us, into this new sense of well-being, so we may transform our lives in spirit and faith.

The path of God, as Jesus exemplifies, is always the path of "suffering love," as Bishop Robert Barron so thoughtfully asserts. Through the example of his ministry and his life, Jesus transformed the world through his grace and compassion. By embracing the cross, Jesus demonstrated that life's fulfillment resides only with love and sacrifice. And this transformative love will enable us to help others bear their burdens and shift focus from ourselves to other people. Each week we gather to celebrate Mass and relive and witness the saving grace of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. This sacred celebration reminds us that we are called as Christians to embrace the path of suffering love and follow Jesus's example. In doing so, we will find *a true life*, not in the accolades and comforts of this world but in Christ's love that empowers us. Let us recommit ourselves to the path Jesus so beautifully illuminated in today's Gospel to demonstrate the fullness of God's eternal kingdom.

Yours in Christ,

Father Rudy