

## Mark 8:27-38

<sup>27</sup>Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” <sup>28</sup>And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” <sup>29</sup>He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” <sup>30</sup>And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup>Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>34</sup>He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

---

## Sermon – Sept 21, 2021 – 16<sup>th</sup> after Pentecost Yr B St James

**“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.**

Jesus says we need to deny ourselves and take up our crosses to follow him. Does this sound a little dreary, arduous, hard going? I don't think it has to be entirely.

Jesus also says if we try to save our life, we will lose it. But if we lose our life for his sake, we will save it. What in the world?

Jesus has reached a turning point in this Gospel of Mark. His healing, preaching ministry is ending. He speaks of his persecution, his suffering and death. He is also telling his disciples that the road ahead for them will be bumpy and will involve suffering.

**‘Let go and let God.’** Have you heard this? It is one of the 12 step sayings of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and all the 12 step programmes.

I think it is what Jesus means when he says we will gain our life by losing it. The very first of the 12 steps is to recognize we are not in charge, we can't do it alone. We need the help of our 'higher power'. We all do. Our Lord says we need to lose our lives. We need to let go and let him in. He loves us. He knows what it is to suffer. He suffers with us and through him always, 'all things work together for good'.

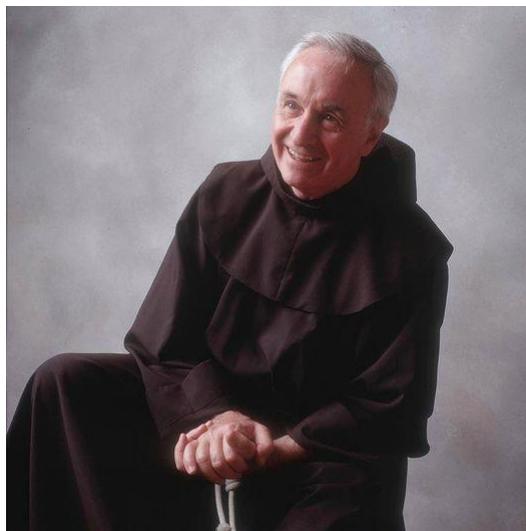
We need to let go. Taking up our cross simply means to accept our crosses, our challenges squarely, knowing we are not alone, knowing our Lord understands suffering and is with us in it to help us through.

So our Lord is saying face your challenges, your 'hard bits', your suffering and lean on the Divine, our Lord or our Higher Power.

And so it seems – that is the way to fulfill our purpose on this earth and fulfillment brings us happiness even in painful situations.

There are lots of examples of people who have taken up their crosses and given themselves over to causes beyond their own.

We are remembering 9/11. Twenty years ago yesterday the twin towers in New York were attacked, causing death and disruption throughout the world.



One man who gave his life was Father Mychal Judge OFM, a Roman Catholic priest and Franciscan friar. He was chaplain to the New York City Fire Department and a campaigner for social inclusion and LGBT rights.

On the morning of September 11th 2001, he rushed to the World Trade Center after the first attack. He entered the burning North Tower, offering aid to the injured and prayers for the dead.

Then the South Tower collapsed, spraying debris into the North Tower lobby. Father Mychal was killed instantly, along with many others. Thousands attended his funeral, including Bill and Hillary Clinton. A campaign for his canonisation continues to gather momentum. His quote:

**"If no one told you today that they love you, let me tell you: I love you, and no matter what mess you're in, you're always held and loved by God" - Fr. Mychal Judge OFM.**

**His prayer**

## Fr. Mychal Judge's Prayer

Lord, take me where You want me to go,  
let me meet who You want me to meet,  
tell me what You want me to say,  
and keep me out of Your way.

<http://www.ourladyofcalvary.com/>

This is the prayer of a man who losing his life to gain it.

On that same fateful day, September 11, 2001, Kevin Tuerff and Kevin Jung were on an Air France flight diverted to Gander NF. Their story is in the new musical



‘Come from Away’

Tuerff said he was anxious when the plane landed in the Newfoundland town, particularly when the pilot said it was because of a terrorist attack in the U.S.

Here is what the airport at Gander looked like that day. Gander is a small town of about 7,000. About 10,000 people arrived there on diverted flights.



With no mobile phones or internet available, it was difficult to know what was going on, so there was a lot of "anxious waiting."

Things changed when the passengers met the people of Newfoundland.

"There [were] so many volunteers, so much food," "Every stove in Gander was cooking, [everybody] in town was going to their linen closet and pulling out pillows and sheets and donating them, not knowing if they would get them back."

Tuerff remembers that the 270 people on his flight ran up a \$13,000 phone bill at the local community college in Gander, but the people in Gander refused to take any money to cover that cost.

Tuerff says "What occurred in Gander was compassion. They were engaged in the suffering of others; when they open their borders, their schools, their churches and their homes to people to take a shower, they engaged in the suffering of others,"

## REFLECTION ON SEPTEMBER 11

"For the better part of a week, nearly every man, woman, and child in Gander and the surrounding smaller towns stopped what they were doing so they could help. They placed their lives on hold for a group of strangers and asked for nothing in return. They affirmed the basic goodness of being human at a time when it was easy to doubt such humanity still existed."

- Jim DeFede

**Mrs Murphy, wife of Moncton Mayor at the time**, took in people even though she had young children.

The idea that helping others is part of a meaningful life has been around for thousands of years. According to the psychologist Carol Ryff, who reviewed the writings of numerous philosophers throughout history, relationships with others are "[a central feature of a positive, well-lived life.](#)"

There is a Chinese saying that goes: "If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody."

For centuries, the greatest thinkers have suggested the same thing: Happiness is found in helping others.

*For it is in giving that we receive* — Saint Francis of Assisi

*The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity* — Leo Tolstoy

*We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give* — Winston Churchill

*Making money is a happiness; making other people happy is a superhappiness* — Nobel Peace Prize recipient Muhammad Yunus

There are many people famous for ‘losing their lives’ or devoting their efforts to something beyond themselves.

[Bill Wilson](#) (1896-1971) was the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, an international organisation with over two million members seeking to help individuals recover from alcoholism. Wilson found a cure for his own alcoholism and set up self-help groups to enable others to do the same. He did not seek to raise money, but gave people the support to give up alcohol.



[Audrey Hepburn](#) (1929 – 1993) Audrey Hepburn supported UNICEF from the 1950s. In the latter part of her life, she retired from acting to devote more time to UNICEF projects in Africa and other countries. *“The ‘Third World’ is a term I don’t like very much because we’re all one world. I want people to know that the largest part of humanity is suffering.”*– Audrey Hepburn.



[Diana](#), Princess of Wales (1961 – 1997) Princess Diana was associated with many hundreds of charities. She paid particular attention to charities involved with AIDS, landmines, prisoners' families and palliative care. *"I knew what my job was; it was to go out and meet the people and love them"* – Princess Diana.



[Oprah Winfrey](#) (1954 – ) Oprah has donated millions of her own fortune for charities such as Angel Network and a charity helping young girls gain an education in South Africa.



[Desmond Tutu](#) (1931 – ) The well-known campaigner against apartheid has also sought to tackle issues such as AIDS in Africa.

We too participate in this.

Each and every one of us has a cross to bear or more than one cross to bear. For some it is a family member caught in addiction. For others it is a loved one with Alzheimers, or deteriorating health. Some suffer from lack of money. Some are lonely, some suffer estrangement by loved ones. Some have cancer or heart problems or anxiety and depression. Jesus invites us to take up our crosses, embrace them even...and let him be in charge. He assures us that is the way to win a life...that is the way to a real life...He is there with us. He has suffered and understands...He is praying in us when we don't know what to say. He is working through us always, always. So let us 'Let go and let God' while shouldering our crosses and walking with Him. Amen.

## Christ suffers with us



"The Day the World Came to Town: 9/11 in Gander, Newfoundland" by Jim DeFede. It tells the story of how a town of 10,000 Canadians rallied around more than 6000 strangers whose flights were redirected to their town when airspace closed over America on Sept. 11, 2001.

Twenty years ago, on Sep. 11, 2001, when the spotlight was at its harshest, Newfoundland shone its brightest when Gander and surrounding towns took in 7,000 passengers from airplanes rerouted and downed at the nearest airport as the Twin Towers burned in New York.

Seven thousand people were suddenly thrust upon a town whose population was only 9,300. And yet those "plane people" were sheltered, fed, clothed, entertained and comforted by a community whose members immediately put their lives on hold to help others in distress.

In those five days, Gander showed the world — at a time perhaps when it needed it the most — there were corners of the planet where kindness and compassion are baked into people's character, where the question of whether to help another in need is not a question at all, merely a concept at which to cock an amused eyebrow before saying, inevitably, "Course b'y."

"That first day we had 7,000 strangers. The third day we had seven thousand friends. And on the fifth day, we lost seven thousand family members. That's how close we became to those passengers."