**THE** [**TWENTY SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)**](https://justmehomely.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/seventeenth-sunday-in-ordinary-time-year-a/)**, 2020.**

 **MT: 16 : 21-27. “THE FIVE STAGES OF SUFFERING…!”**

*A little boy asked to his Dad; “What is the size of God, or how huge is God?” Showing him an airplane on the sky, asked his son; “What is the size of the airplane?” The boy said in reply; “It is very small Dad. I can barely see it.” Then, Dad took him to an airport and as they approached airplane, Dad asked; “And now, what is the size of the airplane?” Then boy said; Wow dad, this is huge. Then the Dad told him; “Like this is God, His Size depends on, how distant you are from Him.****” The closer you are to God, the greater He will be in your life.”******Today’s Readings*** *ask to us to draw near to the Lord, “****loving Him dearly and following Him nearly”.***

In today’s **Gospel** Jesus tells us that in order to love God dearly; “***Deny ourselves****”, say* ***'No' to ourselves and 'Yes' to God, Deny our selfishness, pride and greed.*** “***Take up your cross,***”*the*willingness to accept sufferings, and “**Follow Jesus”** by obeying his commandment of love, and as St. **Paul** reminds us , to ***offer our lives as a living sacrifice to God*.**

***How do we accept or take up our crosses and sufferings of life?*** ***There are different kinds of suffering:*** ***physical, spiritual and psychological.*** There are also **private sufferings** like loneliness and quarantine, and **common sufferings** like those caused by pandemic like Covid-19, and calamities like Hurricane Laura. ***Sufferings are caused*** either by the **cruelty** or **selfishness of others**, or caused by **our own bad choices** and **habits** of life or caused by **disasters** or **natural calamities**, or caused by our **physical or psychological disabilities** or **diseases**.

Let’s meditate today upon the **Five Stages of reacting, facing and taking up of our crosses and sufferings of life.**

**1.The First is the Denial Stage** of Suffering. Here we are not willing to accept the unexpected sufferings of life. Then like Peter, we may deny the painful realities of life or God Himself, on our ways of the Cross.

**2.The Second is the Stage of Getting Angry with God.** Why did God allow this happen to me? Like Peter, we may take Jesus aside, blame Him, and stand as an obstacle before the Lord.

**3.Third is the Bargaining Stage.** Here we make bargains with God such as, If you get me out of this suffering, I will make a pilgrimage, I shall do good acts of charity or I will be good man now onwards and likewise.

**4.The Fourth is the Stage of Depression.** If our bargaining is not working, then it will turn into depression, feels no hope, faith and meaning in life.

**5. The Fifth and the Graceful Stage is the Healing Stage.** At this stage we are ready to face and accept suffering as God’s will and plan. Here we learn to believe that God’s ways and works are miraculous and mysterious and, ***if we are running away from the crosses, we are running away from the graces of the Lord.***

 **Let’s make our crosses of life, the Cross of Jesus.** ***Our personal Crosses become the Cross of Jesus*** when, we suffer by serving others selflessly; or when we join our physical, mental or emotional sufferings to Jesus’ and offer them to the Father in reparation for our and our dear ones’ sins and those of the world. ***St. Monica*** is a great example for us.

The words of the **Archbishop Fulton Sheen,** *“To be a fool for Christ is the greatest compliment the world can give. You and I are in good company, because most of the saints embraced the Cross of Christ and were considered fools for doing so.”*

**Mother Teresa** **of Culcutta** said: “***Sufferings are the ‘Kisses*** ***of Jesus’*** in our life.” ***‘There is no Crown without a Cross.!’***

***Father Thomas Nattekkadan, Jacksonville.***