

## TWENTY FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (9/12-13/2009)

*Isaiah 50/5-9, Psalm 116, James 2/14-18, Mark 8/27-35*

There are times in the gospels when Jesus seems to be playfully teasing his audience, and even his closest followers, but not today.

Jesus is very serious in today's Gospel excerpt.

Here, half way through the *Gospel of Mark*, he unloads the future upon his disciples.

He tells them about his coming trip to Jerusalem and what will happen when he is arrested, tried and put to death.

Immediately, obviously wishing to protect Jesus, Peter jumps in and scolds his Master for such pessimism.

All of this takes place moments after Peter had confessed that he thought Jesus was the true Messiah, the One who was to come.

From that stirring admission of faith to his rebuke from Jesus, Peter runs the gamut.

Now, instead of praising his impetuous fisherman friend, Jesus angrily turns on Peter and calls him "Satan", the adversary.

Poor Peter, with his foot in his mouth once again – and with such good intentions.

Isaiah would have understood what Jesus was saying if we read today's first reading correctly.

In this "suffering servant" section of the prophecy, Isaiah tells how he will be treated by his compatriots. It isn't good!

The Church joins the two readings on this weekend so that we may see and understand the inevitability of Jesus' fatal trip to Jerusalem.

On a totally different note, the second reading is not about suffering but about what we should do about our faith.

Apparently, there were Christians in James' time (late in the first century) who were saying *faith* in Jesus was all that mattered.

Good works were superfluous, and not nearly as important.

James counters that, saying: *"If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also, faith of itself, if it does not have good works, is dead."*

Is that putting it to us or what?

So, in the end, we have Jesus making his way to Jerusalem towards death and resurrection.

And we have Peter trying to block his agenda.

Then we have the Christian community being told by James that their faith has to be backed up by good works.

All in all, this business of following Jesus is not theoretical - it's real and difficult.

We have to make decisions all along the way, and sometimes those decisions are not right on.

Still, we stumble along, faithfully following the fast moving Jesus.

**(On the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11/01, we pause to remember all who died and whose lives were changed forever in that tragedy. We pray also that lasting peace will eventually be the fruit of that terrible time.)**