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Homily for 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday B  
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This is a test! How many of you like to hear these words? I know that most students hate to hear these words, especially if they didn't study or they don't know the material well. But when we hear those words in a doctor's office or in the hospital, these words can also cause some anxiety because it makes us wonder what is going on with our health. Why don't we like tests? If we don't do well in a test at school, then it brings our grade down. If we don't do well in a test at the hospital, it often means we have some uphill battles with our health and possibly some bad news. Tests can often make us face some challenges in life.

As we listened to the readings today, I couldn't help but think about all the tests we have to face in life and the ones that I faced myself. Life itself often gives us many problems to solve and we have to respond. First, let's look at the reading from Isaiah. God has inspired Isaiah to write about what is to come: The suffering servant. It doesn't take much for us to guess who that suffering servant really is: Christ! Yet Isaiah tells us this to give us hope. The suffering that Christ did wasn't for nothing. It was something that brought new life. Of course, that probably isn't the way we typically think about tests or difficulties that face us in life. We want them to disappear or go away as fast as they can. Experience has shown us that this isn't always the case. Life brings us tests and problems to solve all the time. The question is: how do we respond?

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is taking on the role of the suffering servant. He tells His disciples: "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." As He does so, Jesus is also trying to prepare His disciples for some of the things that they are also going to have to face. These are the men who stuck by him when all the others would leave. But at this point in time, when James and John, the sons of Zebedee ask if they can sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in the Kingdom, Jesus knows that they don't realize what they are asking for. Someone who follows Jesus is not always going to have an easy life. Many choices will need to be made along the way.

After hearing these words from Jesus, we will probably never want to hear the word "test" again. We will only want to associate this word with hardship. Yet if that is what one might think after listening to these readings, that is very far from

what Jesus was trying to teach us. Jesus is trying to teach us that He is going to walk along with us each day in the many tests that we face in life. He will not let us get lost or be forgotten. Even the prophet Isaiah is trying to tell us that. I don't want you to get hung up on the suffering part of life or the tests that might await us. Look further ahead and see beyond the suffering servant, that Christ is actually bringing us the message of hope!

I found one of the writings from the life of Mother Teresa that points us in the right direction. Mother Teresa wrote: "God is joy. We have no reason to be unhappy. Christ, wanting to share his joy with his disciples, prayed that 'my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.' Jesus must have radiated joy and you should do the same, in your eyes, attitude, the way you walk, the way you listen and your whole being."

These two things that Jesus says to His disciples are not opposite from each other, but instead are connected to each other. They are connected in one way: through Christ. Christ brings us through those tough times in life to a much better place. We just need to trust in Him and find the joy that He always intended we would find when we have faith and believe.

This is a test! Every day of our life can bring us a test. How will you find Christ when you are in the midst of being tested?