

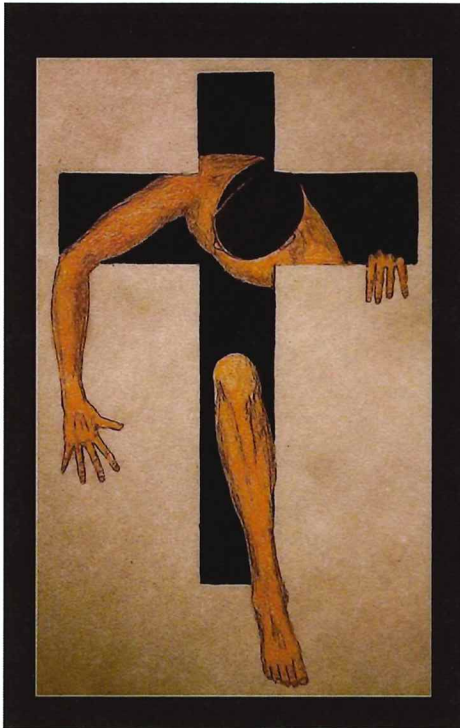


September 3, 2023

22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny their very self, take up their cross, and follow me."

Matthew 16:24



Dear Friends;

The illustration above is by David Hayward. David is a Canadian author, cartoonist, and illustrator who works under the brand name, **NakedPastor**. He was an ordained Presbyterian pastor but now uses his art to reach out to spiritual seekers: those who have left faith altogether, LGBTQ+ Christians, and those who see themselves as called to deconstruct institutional Christianity. In other words, he reaches out to many who are marginalized.

The image above is called the Narrow Way. In this piece David takes the image of the cross and combines it with the passage in Matthew where Jesus says, *"Enter by the narrow gate...Because narrow is the gate and difficult the way which leads to life, and there are few that find it."* Matthew 7:13

When I reflected on today's passage from Matthew this image came to mind. Jesus is announcing the way of his own journey to God. And it will be a difficult passage. Not only that Jesus tells us that his journey is also the pattern of our own life's journey.

This is why Peter reacts so emotionally to the idea of the cross. He sees it as nothing less than a pitiful and fruitless end to Jesus, and in turn all of us. He only understands that he's being invited to die. He does not comprehend what Jesus is saying. The cross can lead us to a new and transformed place. But we must hand ourselves over to its transformative power.

Anglican Priest, Tish Harrison Warren comments on how writers in the Middle Ages spoke of the cross. They would say, *"per crucem ad lucem,"* through the cross to the light. She says, *"We come to know and trust God's love more deeply through our own crosses...I wish there were some easier way...but the way to the light runs smack dab through darkness—or more accurately, we discover the light speeding toward us in these dark places."*

God's love doesn't extinguish our suffering this side of life. Sometimes when we suffer it feels that God is far away and nowhere to be found. God's love is always faithful and takes us where we are. But that love shakes us up and refashions us. It forms us in compassion and mercy.

The love of God insists on making us whole but only *per crucem ad lucem*, through the cross to the light. The cross is not an end but a passageway to a deeper reality and fuller life. Our journey to the light does not take us only through our own crosses, but through the cross of Christ.

We as a parish community are asked to carry the cross in our loss of Karen Randle who was such an integral part of our community. We will miss her but we will greet her again when the light conquers the night.

Peace,

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church