

# ***The King Calls us to Himself and to Mission!***

## **Our Response – Week 36 – Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Me!**

**The Objective:** Realize that living as a disciple calls for a daily embrace of the suffering that life brings our way, but in a very particular way as we embrace it knowing Jesus is with us in the struggle.

**Background:** Too often, our culture, if it acknowledges Jesus at all, presents Him as a caricature rather than who He actually is. Too often, the Jesus presented to us is a fluffy, syrupy shell of a nice person full of smiles and inviting us to simply “be nice.” But that is not who Jesus actually is based on what we read in Holy Scripture and what has been handed down to us from the Apostles. Jesus said a lot of hard things as he taught and preached. One of those was, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” – Luke 9:23

This is the scripture verse that focuses us on this week’s activity. If we truly want to be a disciple of Jesus, then we need to spend time this week allowing the Holy Spirit to break this verse open for us and then apply it to how we live each day.

**What to Do:** This week’s activity is a combination of reflection that culminates in a commitment to embrace ALL of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. There have been countless people who have written volumes on the topic of suffering. So this activity is really only able to scratch the surface of, perhaps, the greatest mystery of life we have to grapple with. But it is important to do what we can to give it proper place in our journey of faith.

Spend a full day early this week reflecting on Luke 9:23-26. Think about what Jesus is laying out as conditions for being a disciple. Then reflect on how you embrace the suffering that comes your way. Every day, we are asked to suffer in some way, mostly little ways, but sometimes, in even greater ways. Allow Luke 9:23 to enter your thought process. Do you willingly pick up the crosses you are asked to carry each day, whether minor annoyances or devastating events that turn your world upside down in a heartbeat? Or, like the culture, do you resist and flee suffering at all costs?

Invite Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to help you take on this deep, mysterious requirement of being His disciple. Ask Jesus to show you how you can unite your sufferings with His and in doing so, participate in the saving work Jesus accomplished on the cross (see Col 1:24). This very Catholic understanding of redemptive suffering is a life-changer.

We aren’t asked to like the suffering that comes our way. But just as Jesus embraced the Cross when it was put before Him, we ARE called to embrace our suffering – but now understanding that when we unite our suffering to Christ’s, we truly participate in the saving work of Jesus. Many cradle Catholics grew up with that notion of “offering it up.” This week, we want to once again, look inward, and ask the Holy Spirit to lead us to a deeper understanding and commitment to this beautiful truth of the faith. As we go through our week, allow the Holy Spirit to begin changing our attitude and reaction to the suffering that comes our way.

**Parents:** Help your children understand the authentic Catholic Christian way to deal with suffering. Help them understand what it means to embrace the suffering that they will inevitably experience in life. Help them learn how to ask Jesus to give them grace and strength, and then to offer up their suffering for the good of someone else who needs it. Help them see that suffering doesn’t have to be useless but can become redemptive as we ask God to use the grace that comes from our suffering, to bring grace and peace to others. Come Holy Spirit!