**Homily** **for the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*Rev. Francis D. Kim*

        How can we have hope when there is no any reason to have hope?

        Some people, I have found, are just naturally optimistic; no matter what happens to them, they almost always react with a brave smile and a positive outlook. “We must keep up our hope,” they say, even when they have no reason to hope. Unfortunately, their hope is little more than wishful thinking.

        And, that is not the kind of hope the Bible urges us to have. The Bible tells us to find our hope in God, not in our circumstances, or our natural optimism or pessimism, or our family or friends, but in Jesus Christ.

        How is this possible? It happens when we realize how much God loves us. His love is so deep that He was willing to give His Son’s life for us. His love never fails. And, it happens when we realize that this life in not all, but ahead of us is Heaven. Do you have hope in Jesus, both for this life and the life to come?

        Everyone has a cross, Christians, non-Christians, the rich, the poor, and people of every age. Maybe, there is a planet where accidents do not occur, where people do not have cancer, where violence does not plague the cities, where all of human life is respected, where people are honest and transparent, where Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases are unknown.

        Maybe, such a place exists in this universe, but that is not where we live. That is not the world in which we were baptized. We are called to follow Christ in this world with the cross we have.

        But, Jesus said many times, “Do not be afraid. Just have faith. Your faith will save you.” Our almighty God will take care of our cross. That’s why Jesus came to the world to be with us and to save us. He never abandons us.

        We can take comfort knowing that Jesus will not ask us to carry a burden we cannot bear. So, our cross is not heavy burden any more. We can carry our cross. And, our cross makes us holy and blessed and leads us eternal glory.

        So, today, we have a powerful teaching of Jesus in the Gospel. He says, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

        The story takes place in Caesarea Philippi. This town was located about twenty miles north of Galilee in a region that was largely Gentile.

        This town had been built in honor of Caesar and contained many monuments to him. Here, Jesus asks His disciples what people are saying about Him and most importantly whom do the disciples consider Jesus to be. Peter proclaims his faith, “You are the Christ!

        The title ‘Messiah’ was loaded with all the hopes and dreams of the jewish people. The word ‘Christ’ or ‘Messiah’ carried the promise of splendor, military victory, hope of national revival, and the restoration of Israel’s former glory with memories of king David and Solomon.

        People longed for a new king, a charismatic leader, a Messiah. Peter was placing all of this on Jesus when he says that Jesus is the ‘Christ’ and ‘Messiah.’

        So, it was a dramatic and disconcerting moment for the disciples when Jesus begins to teach them that the Messiah would have to suffer greatly, be rejected, and even be killed. Jesus tells them that this is the way redemption would take place.

        The main reason Jesus died on the cross was to save us from our sins. And, the Gospel also stresses the importance of His suffering as an example for us.

        The Greek word for ‘example’ comes from ancient school life. It refers to something written down by a teacher, so it could be followed and copied exactly by a child learning to write. Jesus is our copybook. His suffering gave us an example to follow, so we can learn how suffering is to be borne.

        How did Jesus bear His cross? By not giving in to despair or doubt. By looking beyond His suffering and seeing the glory that was to come. By remembering that the Father was with Him and would use His suffering for good. We can do the same.

        That afternoon in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus taught an important truth about our hope and our destiny. We come to the Father’s glory not by going out of this world but through it, not by avoiding our cross but by embracing it.

        Jesus says, “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it.”