



Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke 9: 18-24.

Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Christ of God." He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone. He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe in you and in your love. I trust in you as the way for me to live. I hope in the power of your cross to free me from all that is not you. I love you and want my love to be more real so that I may imitate your pure and total love.

Petition: Lord Jesus, help me to know you so intimately that I will lose myself and follow you with a real love.

1. What People Say: Today more than ever we care what people say and think of us. However, human respect could find no place in the mind of Christ. He cared only for the Father's will. How are we to understand, then, that precisely during a moment of quiet prayer we find Jesus inquiring about "what people say" of him? He wants to know what the thoughts and worries of his disciples are. Jesus makes them see that their awareness of and interest in what others say of him (and of them) is out of proportion with what counts. They need to recognize just how limited the opinions of the crowd are, how far short they fall. The disciples know better; more than a prophet, he is THE Messiah. What matters is not what people think, the

“perception” that others have, but rather the truth of Jesus’ identity. This is what they believe in and have been following. Do I put too much importance in what people think and say?

2. “Who Do You Say I Am?” Not only do the opinions of the crowds leave much to be desired, but the disciples themselves are far from understanding who “the Messiah of God” is. The understanding of their faith is immature and shallow. So, Jesus insists that he must “suffer greatly and be rejected ... and be killed.” How clouded and toned down is our understanding of Christ! Suffering and pain seem foreign to God’s goodness. If we are good we expect no cross, no contradictions, no conflict. Why does Jesus forbid them to spread the news that he is the Messiah? Would it be that others, even more than they, might fail to understand his cross?

3. “Whoever Loses His Life...” The question “Who is Christ?” is better answered by Jesus’ life than by the name “prophet” or “Messiah.” Likewise, my faith is better expressed by how I live than by what I say. “Who he is” determines who we are called to be. To know Christ is to know the way of his discipleship. To know him is to know God’s love expressed in human life. Practically speaking, “Messiah” means “giving oneself for others.” Salvation happens by self-giving, by giving away for others the life we have been given. So if I believe in him and wish to follow him, I must accept what only faith can grasp--that only by dying to self in this life can I know and share God’s truth and life. Do the little sacrifices of my daily life give testimony to my faith in who Christ really is?

Conversation with Christ: Dear Lord, help me not to worry about what others might think or say. May my only concern be to know and love you. Open my soul to embrace the real you, the Christ of the cross, of sacrifice and self-giving. Help me rid my life of a soft, unreal love, which reflects a false Christ. Grant me the grace to die to myself in the details of fulfilling your will each day with joy.

Resolution: Rather than complain the next time I encounter disappointment or contradiction in my life, I will try to offer it gladly to Christ as a testimony of my love for him.

