



**Five Important Spiritual Thoughts from the Liturgy of the Word  
...and follow up for the Secular Franciscan  
February 16 – February 22**

**1 -- "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Mk 8:34)**

**DISCIPLE**

(given to you before)

**"Follow me."  
(Matthew 9:9)**

**In the same way, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.  
(Luke 14:33)**

**"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."  
(Matthew 16:24) / (Mark 8:34)**

Perhaps this is the most important teaching of Jesus on how to achieve a strong spiritual life.

There are three elements to the following of Jesus: denial of self, taking up the cross each day, and following Jesus' steps. If one of the three is missing, then the following of Jesus is imperfect and incomplete and may bring about evil rather than good.

It is intriguing to look at the scenario if one of the three is missing for a Christian disciple.

**+ If we leave out the denial of self, what happens?**

The chances are that even as we take up the cross and follow Jesus' thoughts, we will do it in a selfish way. We become very self-righteous in our approach to what should be and will not admit the possibility of any involvement in evil on our parts. We become judgmental of others and refuse to admit any fault ourselves. We justify ourselves since we argue that we are taking up the cross and following Jesus.

If we do not attack selfishness (the number 1 cause of sin), we will create evil, no matter how Christian we might think we are.

**+ What happens if we leave out "taking up the cross"?**

The chances are here, that even though we admit our selfishness and try to follow Jesus' ways, we will not face the crosses that are part of this world, that is, the pain and suffering which are always present in one form or another. And we go into the "pity party"—the "poor me" syndrome—criticizing God and everyone else for making us suffer. We won't look on the every-day



living as something that we must work at, and accept the crosses which are there every day, and work with them.

There was a great line in the true life adventure of the movie "Apollo 13". When everything was going wrong, the Director of Operations, Gene Frantz said, we have to **"work the problem."** He took everything that the trapped astronauts had in their capsule, threw them on a table in front of his engineers, and said those words—work the problem—figure out from what you have, exactly what they have to do. That is, **"Do your Christian best with the circumstances that you are given"**—what might be called the prime directive of the spiritual life. (Television series: Star Trek)

The person who is not accepting the crosses of daily life are not "working the problems" of daily living.

**+ And, what if we leave out "following Jesus' steps"?**

Here, we have denied ourselves, and we have taken up the crosses of every-day living, but we don't have a guide.

We will not consciously do this since we are indeed Christians, but it is something that happens because of our **busyness**. We just don't take the time that we should. We don't do the meditation; we don't do the spiritual reading that we should.

Bishop Weisenburger a couple of years ago in one of his writings said that we are spending the majority of our time pursuing these five things, and therefore following them instead of following the Lord:

- **busyness**—we follow our work, play, the things that make up day-to-day living;
- **materialism**—we want more and more things even though we do not need them at all;
- **revenge**—we follow the thought of getting back at people;
- **individualism**—I follow what I want;
- **entitlement**—I want what I think I deserve in life.

Another problem in our Christian world is **ignorance**. We don't do the spiritual reading that we should. We should be reading the thoughts about spiritual development and Christian theology every day in one form or another, and from every point of view, conservative as well as progressive.

The exaggeration of John the Evangelist to close his Gospel is a great one to think about as we think of the reading that we must do: "There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written."

**2 – "It is good that we are here!" (Mk 9:5)**

...In what areas can I be a little more positive in my thinking?

SHAPING THE FRANCISCAN FOOTPRINT  
by Father Mike Scully OFM Cap., Regional Spiritual Assistant



**3 – “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” (Mk 9:7)**

...Have I made the reading of the Gospels a significant part of every day?

**4 – “Offer no resistance to one who is evil.” “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Mt 5:39, 44)**

...As I think of the person(s) with whom I have the most trouble, how am I acting toward them?

**5 – “They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest.” (Mk 9:33)**

...Is pride one of my faults?