



Sept. 12, 2021 | Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is 50:5-9a | Jas 2:14-18 | Mk 8:27-35

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

I think it can be easy to romanticize faith: the post-retreat high, the inspirational homily, even the motivational wall art that pops up on Pinterest. But *keeping* the faith can be hard sometimes. And living it out? Even harder. Today's readings both challenge and encourage us, as they so often do. The Letter of James pulls no punches: Faith without works is "dead." And in today's Gospel, right after Peter says, "You are the Christ," Jesus tempers that Good News, telling him that even the Son of Man must suffer greatly. We who follow Jesus must also be willing to take up our cross. This is a daily challenge to choose life over death; to choose the transformative power of Jesus over sin that creeps into our lives; to make the choice to put others' needs before our own. None of this is easy. But as the prophet Isaiah reminds us, we don't have to do it alone; indeed, the Lord God is our help. We can choose well.

ACTIONS Brainstorm new ways to witness to your faith. It could be as simple as picking up extra food for the pantry in the back of church or changing up "Grace" at dinner to add prayers for others.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

I'm inspired when the young people in our parish assist with the Sunday liturgy and do service projects in the community. As a working parent (and back when I was a "stay-at-home" mom), I tell myself, maybe someday when things slow down, I'll do more. But honestly, I think the teens in the youth group – between work, school, and sports – are busier than I am. As we listen to today's readings, wherever we may be in life and faith, what stands out? Is it James' entreaty to pair faith with works? Or Jesus' words that "whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it"? Or the prophet Isaiah's rock-solid faith? Today's readings give us many ways to witness to our faith in Jesus – through prayer, service, generosity, perseverance, works, and words. We can ask the Holy Spirit to show us which of these gifts we can share with others this week.