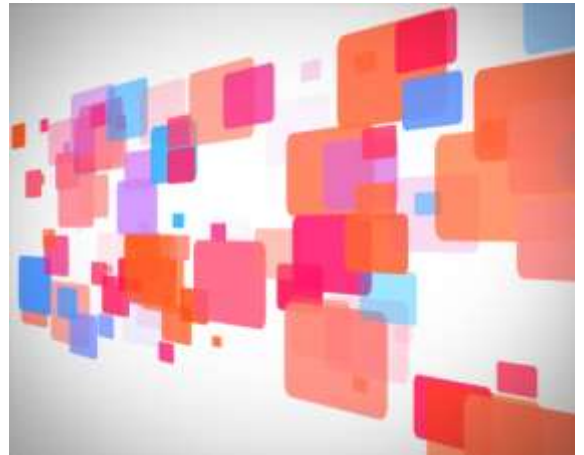


(Food for thought: Gospel Matthew
16: 21-27)

“Understanding the bigger picture”



Today's Gospel unfolds a sudden turnaround in the relationship between Jesus and Peter. In the verses immediately preceding today's (last Sunday's gospel) Jesus sings Peter's praises ("Blessed are you Simon son of John...") and is ready to give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Peter will have authority over Jesus' mission. However today Jesus turns on Peter, calls him Satan and chases him away. I'm sure Peter was feeling pretty good about himself after being called "Blessed," and he must have been taken quite aback with Jesus' sudden change of mood. He had simply taken Jesus aside and told

him not think about his suffering and death. Yet Jesus rebuked him publicly, in front of all of his friends.

We can't reserve spirituality or discipleship to just those moments of uplift. We all have a spiritual life. The question we ask today, in the light of the scriptural readings, concerns the health of our spiritual life. Our lives can be directed or misdirected by the condition of our spirits. Our spiritual life either holds us together or is the cause of chaos and misdirection. It can either make us see the total picture more clearly with the eyes of faith, or see only what we want to see. The grace of our Gospel today is to awaken our hearts from their distractions and to stir us to examine our spiritual lives more fully. Like Peter, we cannot let ourselves get in the way of Christ—His teaching, His goodness, His redemption, or His love.



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