

Rev. Randall Hubbard, Presider  
Deacon Lucio Caruso, Homilist  
Jeremiah 20:7-9  
Romans 12:1-2  
Matthew 16:21-27

22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
August 27-28, 2011  
"BEHIND CHRIST"

"There's a monster under my bed!!!!" How many parents have heard that? With your frightened child holding on tightly "behind you," you lift the covers, look under the bed, perhaps let your child peek, and calmly say: "see, there's nothing there, you can go back to sleep."

"Something's hiding in my closet," a child you're babysitting shouts! You accompany the scared child to her room. She clutches your hand, tiptoeing "behind you" while you open the closet door and show there's nothing to be afraid of.

"What was that?" In the middle of the night, my wife hears a sound in the basement. Being the brave husband that I am, I assure my wife, as she goes to check it out, that I am following right "behind her"! I have her back!!!!

"Behind" is a safe place to be.

Our gospel today treats us to another episode of: "Leave it to Peter."  
Oh Peter! Time and again, he puts his foot in his mouth and acts without thinking things through. An impulsive sort – where we get the word "impetuous"

Of course, Peter means well! He wants to protect Jesus.  
Who wouldn't want to save a friend from suffering and death?

But by taking matters into his own hands, Peter becomes an obstacle in Jesus' way. And so Jesus doesn't mince words, calling Peter "Satan!" Ouch! Isn't Jesus overreacting?

It helps to know that the word "Satan" – means "adversary." Peter, unknowingly as a novice disciple, makes himself an adversary to Jesus, tempting Him away from what Jesus knew He had to do. Serious stuff! Corrective action is called for!

“Get behind me, Satan”, far from being a cruel remark or putdown, is a necessary disciplinary (or dis-ci-pli-ning) action. Peter needs not so much to be "put in his place" but "to take his place" as a disciple again – behind the Master. Behind Jesus, Peter will be safe, and there he'll learn to follow as a disciple.

We too, if disciples we would be, need to “get behind Jesus” and follow.

Now following Christ and taking up the cross won't be easy. Like Jeremiah discovered, being faithful to God's Word will not always win us popularity contests! Doing the right thing - speaking up for gospel values and our Church's social teachings may well bring ridicule and rejection. We might even feel “duped” at times.

Of course, we would rather avoid the cross; but the cross, as Jesus teaches today, is a necessary part of discipleship. "Taking it up" will involve sacrifice, suffering, denying selfish wants, giving up control, courageously facing our fears.

And we can't go around the cross or take a detour, as Peter preferred. No, following “behind Christ” we must go through the cross. This is the core mystery of our faith. Through suffering comes glory; through losing our lives, we save them; through death comes life!

Taking up the cross also means facing "head on" our own sinfulness, fears, addictions - whatever obstacles that tempt us away from the path God wants for our lives. We all have monsters under the bed, skeletons we keep hidden in the closet, and fears buried deep in the basement of our souls.

As it was for that frightened child or cowardly husband, it's scary to face these; but following "behind Christ", we don't face them alone! We let Him first look under the bed, open that closet door, and lead us by the hand down to the basement.

“Behind Christ” and with His love and assurance before us and beside us, we can face the darkness and brokenness in our lives, and experience His forgiveness, healing and peace. Transformed by Christ, we will find our fullest life.

### **SING INVITING CONGREGATION TO JOIN WITH ME:**

**CHRIST BEFORE US, CHRIST BESIDE US, CHRIST UNDER OUR FEET...  
CHRIST WITHIN US, CHRIST OVER US, LET ALL AROUND US BE  
CHRIST**