

# **The Inclusive Community**

**March 8, 2009**

**Homily of Anthony T. Padovano**

**Warning**

**Mark 8:31-38**

**We have heard the passage. Let us catch the message of it for our own lives. I would like to do this by asking three questions and applying the answer to Jesus and to ourselves.**

**1. Do bad news and hope come to us at the same time?**

**The answer is “yes.” More. There is no other way that hope comes to us. If the news is not bad, there is no hope. It is only when despair is a possibility, that hope emerges as a virtue.**

**Jesus speaks for the first time in Mark about his suffering and death, in this passage.**

**That news is about as bad as it gets.**

**I do not think that Jesus expected crucifixion. So the news will get worse. He did sense that things were going very wrong and that he was on a collision course with constituencies in Jerusalem who would not let him get away with what he was trying to do.**

**He suspected he would be killed but he did not know when or how. We have had instances of these suspicions in our own time. Lincoln had a sense of impending doom and Martin Luther King said he would not live until he was forty. He was killed at 39.**

**Sometimes you know, you just know.**

**Jesus knew but must have spoken vaguely about it. The way Lincoln or Martin Luther King did.**

**Nor do I think he spoke of resurrection in any clear manner. This is why none of the disciples got it and no one was expecting to see him alive and with them again.**

**I suspect that when he gave this bad news to his disciples he then spoke of hope in some general way and spoke of his trust in God.**

**This may have been a little like Martin Luther King saying that we shall make it to the mountain top even if he will not be there.**

**Even when news is bad, very bad, and only when it is very bad, does hope happen. It is hope if it is not wishful thinking. It is hope if things do not seem to favor a positive outcome. It is hope when you sense that the outcome is certain even though you cannot prove it and you navigate between wishful thinking and genuine hope.**

**Let me give some ways this happened in our era:**

**Anyone who knows history and human nature would have known that the Nazis could never have created an evil system that would endure, even when the Nazis were winning everywhere.**

**Likewise, anyone who knows history and human nature knew the Soviet Union would not last and knows that terrorism can never win and that the financial collapse of the United States will not happen and that people will never become bad and certainly not, worse than they were in previous ages.**

**These conclusions are not wishful thinking.**

**Jesus knew his message and he could not fail. And he was right.**

**2. When you know suffering is unavoidable, what do you do about your friends who are in denial?**

**Jesus, as I said, was not specific about crucifixion and resurrection. He did know things were going badly. He went on hoping nonetheless.**

**Peter, however, denies the suffering and tells Jesus he can avoid it. Peter, Mark says, “rebukes” Jesus. What must he have said? Probably, something like this.”Jesus, you can avoid all the suffering by being less confrontational. You can avoid the suffering by not talking about it the way you just did. You’re depressing me and all of us.”**

**When Martin Luther started the Reformation, a brilliant and progressive Catholic thinker in the Netherlands, Erasmus, wrote Luther and asked him not to be so confrontational, to be more political and patient. Luther said that this strategy had failed for the last few centuries and the Church was becoming more corrupt. Even if I die, Luther says, the time is now for radical reform.. There is no other way.**

**Jesus turns on Peter and says: “Stop this. I am Jesus, not Peter. You are not a friend; you are an adversary. Adversary is what “Satan” means in Hebrew. Get behind me “Satan.”**

**Why was Jesus so upset with Peter? I think it was because Peter did not get it and because Jesus was frightened himself.**

**A little bit earlier in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus was tempted in the desert by “Satan” Mark says.**

**Jesus puts Satan behind him in Mark’s opening chapter and, in his first words in the Gospel, says “The time is now. There is no other way. The kingdom of God must be proclaimed - Now”**

**3. Do we trust the Church or do we trust our own life more?**

**We need to trust more than ourselves but never give more trust to others than we give to our life.**

**Mark has Jesus tell us this.**

**Jesus says to Peter, a representative of the Church, as it were: “What do you know? You deal with what serves your agenda, not the agenda of God or other people. Your mind is “not on divine things but on human things”, on politics rather than life.**

**Jesus makes it clear that he will suffer and that he will prevail.**

**The Jewish community in the time of Jesus believed that those who really belonged to God were certainly not the crucified but those who were branded as God's own property. Branding was symbolized by the Hebrew letter Tau, which looks like the letter "T" in our alphabet. To wear a Tau was a sign that you belonged to God and that you would change your life to show it.**

**The Tau later for Christians was also, as the letter "T" is, a sign of a cross.**

**Jesus says that he will suffer to show he belongs to God, and will not give himself to safe, narcissistic, self-serving agendas. He tells Peter he has it wrong and that he is having enough trouble doing what he has to do without Peter wanting him to belong to a Church rather than to God.**

**Jesus cries out that the whole world is not worth one honest life. This is what it means to save your life and not lose it. Having life meant having an honest life, not a corrupt or dishonest one. Jesus says if you miss this, you miss the whole point of living. Peter and the Church even may want you to have a less honest life. Jesus says he will have none of that.**

**Only, Jesus says, if you give your life for what Christ stands for and for the Gospel, will you have an honest life.**

**When Jesus says this, there is no written Gospel. That will come forty years later with Mark. When Jesus says Gospel in Mark, it does not mean a book. It means "Good News." The Good News is hope and an honest life. Only that, Jesus says, is worth suffering for. Only that brands us as God's own property, as God's family, as God's people. You give your life for that and you get it back. You never lose it. You give your life for something less and you lose your life, years before you die.**