

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – A
September 1, 2002

We have all seen the television commercials that promise relief
from pain just by taking a little pill everyday.

Then a soft rapid voice adds,

“Side effects may include headache, nausea, upset stomach,
dizziness, stroke or temporary blindness.”

Pretty sneaky, we think, to promise something good
and then throw in the legal disclaimer.

Surely, we wouldn't expect anything like that from Jesus!

Oh?

In Mark 10, Jesus promises his followers

that they will receive houses and brothers and sisters and
mothers

and children and lands, with persecution, and eternal life.

What's was that slipped in between “lands” and “eternal life?”

Persecution?

Is that, like the commercial,

one of the side effects of being a follower of Christ?

We are inclined to hear what we want to hear,

and we don't want to hear about persecution.

Yet that is the message of all three readings today.

In today's Gospel, Peter certainly doesn't want to hear about persecution.

Remember last week, Peter correctly answered Jesus' question,

“Who do you say that I am?”

by saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

Jesus blesses him and says,

“Flesh and blood have not revealed this,

but my heavenly Father.

You are Peter, upon this rock I will build my church...

I give you the keys of the Kingdom.”

And now, almost with the same breath,

Jesus tells Peter to get behind him, calling him Satan.

Peter does not realize that God's ways are not our ways.

The divine view of the messiah is not:

A conquering warrior
One who will restore Israel's kings
Or one who will destroy their enemies.
Instead, the divine messiah,
will die for his people
He will conquer sin and death itself
And He will do so to save all nations and people.

No, God's ways are not our ways.
Even Jesus', humanity had to struggle mightily with this
As he prayed in the garden that, "not my will, but yours be done!"

So, is it any wonder that we also struggle?
We need to remember that God's ways are not our ways.
Jesus doesn't promise that the path of discipleship will be free
from pain, suffering, disappointment, persecution and even
death.
Instead, he promises that we will never be alone,
He will always be with us and we will get through it together.