

Fr. Romeo Evangelista's Homily
August 30, 2020
Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Who among you here love to watch reality TV? I know that some people even some of my friends like to watch Survivor, the Bachelor, or the Bachelorette and many more. These programs excite people because there is human drama involved. A reality program is not merely a showcase of talents, beauty, or wit. First and foremost, it is a challenge of guts. With the many hurdles, obstacles, and humiliation to overcome, we await the reaction of the contestants. Will he or she continue to fight or start the flight?

In daily life, there is no hidden camera following our moves, nor is there a mini microphone recording our comments. With or without these gadgets, our life is a true reality program. Day in and day out, we are faced with a multitude of challenges and trials. We feel them even if at times, we do not see them. And in every turn, the same questions are asked: Will he or she continue to fight or resort to flight?

Today's Gospel instructs us in the way to handle the cross that comes with life. Jesus indicates that the way to become His disciples involves forgetting self, carrying the cross, and following Him. He encourages us to have the determination and strength to pick up the cross and fight to the finish. Does He have the right to prod us into the course of action? Yes, of course, for remembering Jesus is remembering the God-man who bore the cross on His shoulders and was nailed to it to his gruesome death. When Jesus tells us, "Fight!" he knows what it means. When we say that the Resurrection is Jesus' victory, we know that it is so only because he fought for it.

The problem with many of us is that instead of fight, our favorite word is flight. When we realize the enormity of challenges before us, we do not pick up the cross. We pick up our cross and start racing away. Daunted by the pain and the difficulty, we run away from the test. We have been used to so much comfort or learned to be indifferent, that we dread resolving life's trials.

When there are problems to be solved between couples, within the family, or workplace, isn't it that many people would rather flee, keep quiet, seek liquor or drugs, then courageously face the issues? Students having trouble with their courses drop their subjects or

shift to another college or university. Even some priests, facing problems in their assignments, pack their bags and leave. Before uncharted waters, many choose to retreat rather than explore the possibilities that lie ahead. This explains why many people are unfulfilled, full of regrets, sad and depressed. A life of constant running from our responsibilities and our possibilities depletes our energy and strength. It moves us away from the destiny planned by God, our own “resurrection.”

Friends, Jesus points us to the cross not as a sign of pain but as a symbol of hope, a path to victory. If we ignore the cross of life, we will never grow, mature, or develop beyond our comfort zones. We need to take up the cross and experience “creative suffering” – the necessary task of identifying our problems, confronting them, and overcoming them. This is the path of the strong, the heroes and the saints. They were blessed because they chose “fight” over “flight.”