

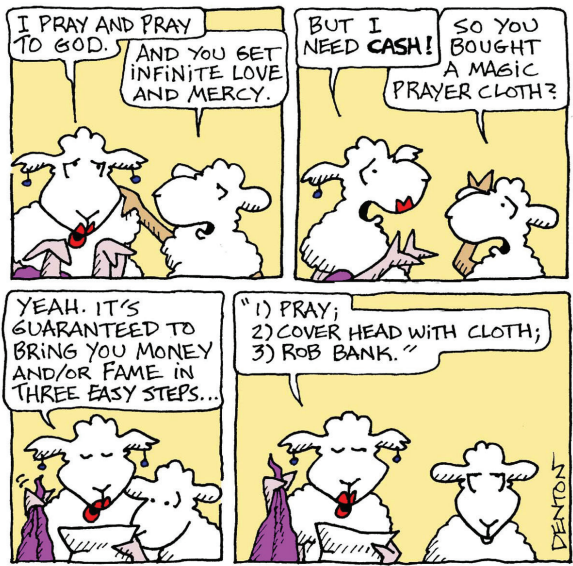
Losing but Gaining Life

This Week's Readings at Mass

- Jeremiah 20:7-9 • Jeremiah's conflict
- Romans 12:1-2 • A living sacrifice
- Matthew 16:21-27 • "Get behind me Satan"

One of the reasons that so many Jews of Jesus' day had trouble accepting him as their Messiah is that they were waiting for a Messiah who would liberate their country from their Roman occupiers with military strength. Not only did Jesus not train an army against the current empire, but he also taught non-violent resistance against the Romans. He showed his willingness to suffer at the hands of the religious leaders rather than retaliate. Many people couldn't wrap their minds around such a leader. (The Newbery Medal book, *The Bronze Bow*, by Elizabeth George Speare, depicts this well.) In this passage, we see Peter resist this idea too.

Peter was one of Jesus' closest friends. Who can fault him for not wanting to see Jesus suffer and die? Who among us would have wanted to see Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. or Oscar Romero suffer and die because of their unwavering commitment to justice and love for all peoples? It is a natural human response to instinctively want to save our lives and save the lives of our loved ones. Yet Jesus (and Gandhi, King, and Romero) was guided by something higher than an instinct for self-preservation. He understood that something even greater could come out of suffering and death—new life. Jesus' resurrection unleashed a force of love that has forever changed history because Jesus was willing to die rather than have God overpower human free will and save him from the cross.



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"Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God."

Sheepish Question:
How do some "easy steps" to attaining worldly desires lead me astray from following Jesus?

derstood that something even greater could come out of suffering and death—new life. Jesus' resurrection unleashed a force of love that has forever changed history because Jesus was willing to die rather than have God overpower human free will and save him from the cross.

We can try to avoid suffering, preserve our life as we know it, and "gain the whole world" in riches and security, but ultimately that will kill our souls. Jesus doesn't teach that the point is to suffer for the sake of suffering, but that when pain comes to us, as it inevitably will, we can face it head-on rather than run from it. Then, in losing our lives, we will eventually discover that we have found new life.

Questions of the Week

- 1 Share about a time when you saw or experienced new life come out of someone's suffering.
- 2 How might God be inviting you to deny yourself or take up your cross now so that you can gain new life?

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