

Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Today’s Gospel reading leads us to think about what it means to really be a follower of Christ.

When we were baptized and confirmed we made some pretty serious promises. For most of us, our godparents spoke on our behalf at our baptism. For those of us who chose confirmation, we stood before the bishop and declared our desire and commitment to follow Christ in all ways.

We were asked: Will you continue in the apostles teaching? Will you persevere and repent in resisting evil? Will you proclaim the Good News? Seek and serve Christ and love your neighbor? Strive for Justice and peace and respect the dignity of every person?

We didn’t shrug our shoulders or say “sure, I guess so” But to each of these questions we responded:

“I WILL, WITH GOD’S HELP”

Lucky for us, we have the opportunity to renew our Baptismal promises each year at the Easter Vigil and whenever we witness a baptism or confirmation at church. These promises and our simple response need to be revisited, lest we forget them. That regular affirmation of our faith is what following Jesus is all about.

So, what does that look like today - to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him?

To deny oneself is to practice self-discipline. It might mean letting yourself have only one ooey gooey chocolate cupcake instead of three. Or

turning off screens and cell phones at mealtime. Or (and I must continually work at this) reserve a time and a place for daily morning prayer. Just like we exercise our bodies by walking and our minds by reading or doing puzzles, morning prayer helps us exercise our faith.

Jesus says we must take up our cross. When we do that, we are saying YES to living without something. We are giving up our free time for the betterment of someone or something else. Sacrificing our own time, talent and treasure for the greater good of our neighborhood, our family and our parish community. Each week, our Parish Administrator, Kara Noble, sends out a “News from ECOTA” email blast. That Saturday email is full of volunteer opportunities, requests for donations, and the prayer needs of others. Are you not much for email? The same information is pretty much repeated in “ECOTA Happenings” at the end of each Sunday’s leaflet.

Jesus tells us to “Follow Him.” We are called to live by his example and teachings. To live in love and humble service. To welcome strangers, feed the hungry, visit the sick. Following Jesus requires making decisions, doing intentional work, making disciplined time for study and prayer and sacrifice. It may sound like an impossible, heavy burden. But we know better. As our Baptismal covenant states very clearly: WE WILL, WITH GOD’S HELP!”

Source: “I Will with God’s Help: A Reflection on the Lectionary for August 30, 2026” by Rev. Rondesia Jarrett-Schell, Washington DC, August 18, 2026.