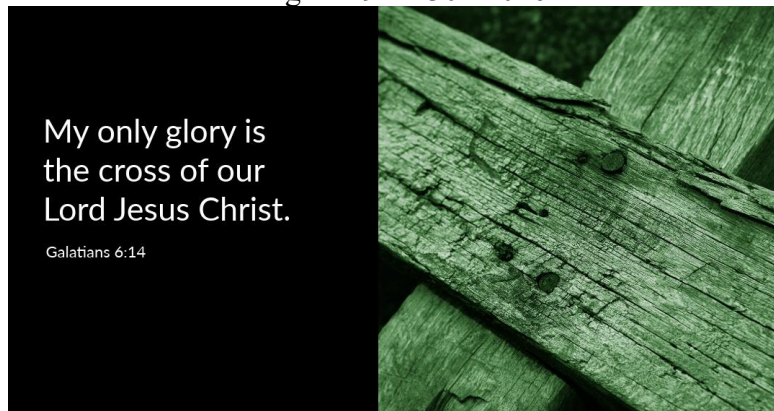


Homily by Fr Justin Driscoll for the 22nd Sunday of the Year [A]

August 29th – 30th 2026



Earlier this week as I'd begun to consider our Gospel for this Sunday's Mass with Peter again featuring prominently, not as the one named by Jesus as the Rock upon which he would build his church that was last Sunday's Gospel, but rather as the one who misinterprets what being the Messiah is all about, rebuking Jesus, overwhelmed his talk of suffering and death – and as I pondered Peter's predicament, I read one of the many tributes written after the news of the death of Dolly Parton had broken. I'd never imagined that Dolly Parton would ever feature in one of my homilies, but [Juliette Hughes thoughtful piece simply titled Goodbye, Dolly](#), led me to a recording of Dolly Parton singing [He's Alive, by Don Francisco](#) a song about the resurrection, from Peter's perspective, he crafted a consummate telling of the Resurrection story, which ended up as his best-known tune. Juliette Hughes defies anyone to watch Dolly Parton's live performance without being moved by her obvious prayerfulness and commitment. She went on to write that Dolly Parton embodied the kind of Christianity we could all learn from: utterly loving and giving, full of the joy of creation that she herself took active part in. Creating as a constant creative, she never stopped.

In strong language that doesn't exclude love, Jesus puts Peter in his place: behind him, following him which is the right place for every disciple. Peter has a long journey to make with Jesus before he realises how costly the discipleship of a crucified and risen Messiah will be. So Jesus explains not only to Peter, but to all disciples that those who follow him will have to share his cross. This isn't a call to self-destruction, but a challenge to find life by living with all our energies centred on God given with a promise

by Jesus of a reward to those who have done what the unselfish orientation of their lives to him and their sisters and brothers demands.

In the New Testament the cross means that suffering that comes into our lives because of the choices we have made for the Kingdom of God. In that sense it is something that we choose and are invited continually to take up as part of our following and living a Gospel way of life.

There are both religions of devotion and religions of commitment. A religion of devotion is a religion that comforts and is often centred on ourselves rather than on others. A religion of commitment is one of challenge, of risk and is centred on others.

In the Gospels, Jesus asks for commitment from his followers - "if anyone wants to be a follow of mine, they must renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me..... Anyone who loses their life for my sake will find it."

To be disciples, we are asked to commit ourselves to the reign of God and follow through with this commitment and be willing to accept the consequences of where it might lead us. This we know can be a struggle, and in our time there is a very definite counter cultural flavour to it. It asks us at times to be willing to be different, to not always go along with the crowd, to have courage enough to allow the Gospel to lead us – embodied in Jesus: through justice, mercy, service, compassion, community, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and love. This way is not always the easy way for us, nor may it always seem the safest or most expedient, but it is the way that our best self takes shape and how we become people of Gospel integrity. Paradoxically, it is also the road to true and deep happiness, losing our lives and finding them.

For us this is the ultimate mystery, revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ, who surrendered himself, abandoning his own will to God's - in dying to this he was raised to new life.

We're not asked to become miserable in our following of Christ, as he came that we might have life and have it to the full. We are invited to live the reign of God, lovingly, freely, and with hope and with joy. The cross is never an end in itself, nor should we allow it to become so, to sacrifice simply for the sake of it. As Easter people, the cross is to lead us to new life with Christ. We cry our *Lord, by your Cross and resurrection, you have set us free. You are the saviour of the world!*