

Father O'Connor's Homily for 30 August 2026
Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time-A

Jeremiah 20: 7-9
Romans 12: 1-2
Matthew 16: 21-27

Last week I told you about two people who were visiting Nassau in the Bahamas and who joined me early every morning to watch the sun rise over the ocean and to thank God for another new day.

I have a special place in my heart for the Catholic Archdiocese of Nassau in the Bahamas, having visited there many times. Archbishop Patrick Pinder is friend of mine and so are several of his priests.

Msgr. Preston Moss was the senior priest in the Bahamas, having been the Vicar General and the pastor of Saint Anselm Parish. He was called home by God on 11 March 2019 at the age of 79. And I am remembering a dinner conversation with Msgr. Moss that reminded me of today's Gospel.

Jesus teaches us: "Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." Underneath this invitation is a personal question that Jesus asks each one of us: "Do you love Me? Do you love Me enough to deny yourself? Enough to take up your cross? Enough to follow Me? Enough to be known as My disciple? Do you love Me that much?"

There can be a difference, of course, between believing in Jesus and loving Jesus. A person can believe in Jesus and not really love Jesus. But if a person loves Jesus, they are going to believe in Him as well. "Do you love Me?" Jesus asks.

During that dinner, Msgr. Moss told me about calling children up into the sanctuary at homily time, as they often do in the Bahamas, to ask them questions and give them instruction.

He began that particular Sunday by asking the children around him at the altar: "Do you love Jesus?"

And they all answered: "Yes, we love Jesus."

Then he asked them: "How do you know that you love Jesus?"

And one little boy, without a moment's hesitation, said: "Because Jesus is with me. He's right here," as he pointed to his heart.

Msgr. Moss said that the homily was over there and then. That little boy had been absolutely profound in answering how he knew that he loved Jesus: "Because He is with me. He's right here – in my heart."

Being a disciple of Jesus means that Jesus is with us all the time. He's right here – in our hearts. And because we love Jesus, we deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. We love Him that much.

Msgr. Moss told me another story about a little Bahamian boy named Anthony whose family struggled to make ends meet, but who were rich in their love for God. Every evening as they prayed before dinner they each added a personal petition.

One night Anthony added: "Jesus, you know my shoes are getting pretty worn out and they are the only ones I have. Could you please send me a new pair of shoes?" Anthony offered that same petition several nights in a row.

Anthony's mother was talking with one of her friends on the phone about how he had been praying. And the friend asked what kind of shoes Anthony wanted and what size he wore. She said that she would buy them and drop them off for them to give to Anthony.

The gift arrived and Anthony's parents wondered how they should present these shoes to Anthony. Should they tell him that "they were a gift from Mrs. Rolle who thinks so much of you?" Or should they tell Anthony: "I was talking with Mrs. Rolle about you and, because you prayed, God inspired her to go out and buy you this new pair of shoes."

It was the second approach that they took. And Anthony felt very good because he truly believed that God loved him so much that God would make sure that somehow his prayer for a new pair of shoes would be answered.

God answers our prayers in so many ways. Sometimes God answers us directly. Sometimes God engages other people to be His answer to our prayers. Sometimes God asks us to be the agents of His blessings. And I truly believe that oftentimes our needs are answered because somebody else has prayed.

And so Jesus says to us in today's Gospel: "Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." Because we love Jesus, we are able to do these things. We love Jesus that much.

I invite you to put yourself in that dialogue that Msgr. Moss had with the children, for we are all children of our Heavenly Father:

"Do you love Jesus?"

"Yes, I love Jesus."

"How do you know that you love Jesus?"

"Because Jesus is with me. He's right here – in my heart."