

I am not a big sports fan. Several years ago I was having dinner with some good friends, and their parents. The Dad, a wonderful gentleman, started to talk football with me. Now I was responding in kind because I like him, I was grateful for his engagement, and I read headlines so I had a grasp of what he was talking about. His Daughter, my friend said “DAD, stop. Bob doesn’t like sports.” I replied: “No, it’s not that I don’t like sports, I simply don’t care about sports.” I know about them, I can carry on, but to be honest, and no offense, if the wolfpack, 49’rs, even the Browns lose, I don’t get upset.

Couple of weeks ago someone wanted to talk with me because this person had an experience that was disconcerting to him. He has been with a group who were evangelical Christians. They believed in Jesus! As this man did too. Yet, he observed that this group of Jesus believers were treating others rudely, like the waitstaff in a restaurant. So he casually remarked about it, and how it seems to contradict their belief in Jesus. Their comment back was, it only mattered to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior; but beyond that...it had little impact on the way they lived.

I find that sad.

People can quote to me many stats on football teams, baseball teams, other sports; they will travel far to games and matches, buy all the stuff; change their mass times or not even go to mass, so as to watch or go to a game.

Yet, when something goes wrong in their lives, when something does not make sense, when they suffer, they are at a loss, they don’t understand... to whom or where do they go.

Jesus asks his disciples a basic question: who do you think I am. Peter scores an “A” on this pop quiz. He gives the correct answer, but he does not understand the answer he gives. He knows the answer, he knows the headline, but he has not been changed.

Jesus makes the point that he being the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one means something greater. It is not merely a term of power, majesty, royalty. It is not a glory, or at least in the sense we often associate glory.

We call it a mystery, meaning there is a depth of meaning to it that cannot be found merely by an intellectual assent, or staying superficial. It has a meaning beyond our categories, our normal way of thinking. It can help us to grow.

Understanding Jesus and his death and resurrection and what this conveys of God and the world takes effort and immersion into the mystery. It means we grapple with questions and our own understanding of life, and in humility, we let ourselves be changed.

We let die parts of us, so as to find more.

We open ourselves to moving from one way of living, to a more profound way of living.

Death, suffering will confront us all. People's lives this past week have been severely uprooted; people have been forced to be out of their homes, some of them have lost their homes.

Last week and this coming week there will have been three funerals; people confronting the death of parents and siblings.

In the two decades of priesthood, I note that some people manage these well...others not so much.

As well, people confronted with hardship, with suffering, with loss; some manage it well, others...

Those who manage it well have a larger sense of life and what it all means. They trust that God remains present to the suffering they have experienced. They grasp that in Christ, and his own death and resurrection, reveals that our hurts, our pain, our losses, though painful, are not the end. God walks with us. There will be healing, there will be love.

Jesus' death and resurrection, the faith that we believe will change us; I hope.

The ideal is that as we approach our eucharistic table, as we extend our hands to receive the very body and blood of the Son of God, we extend ourselves to God and say yes, not only do we believe, but we want to grow.

We want to KNOW Jesus Christ. We want to KNOW God.

And experience our lives on a whole different level.

Yet that also means we have to put forth effort. We have to search, pray, contemplate, read; sit with our lives and open ourselves to the mystery of Jesus Christ.

We have to move beyond being a fan of Jesus, and follow Jesus.,