

The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ, September 12, 2021

WRONG THINKING

This weekend we mark 20 years since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on our nation. That Tuesday morning, 19 men associated with the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four passenger planes filled with innocent people. Those terrorist attacks did not happen because on the morning of September 11 a group of men suddenly decided to hijack airliners and turn them into weapons. Those attacks happened because of what was in the minds of those men for months and years before. Their thinking had become warped and misguided.

This Sunday's Gospel gives us an example of wrong thinking that leads to wrong conclusions - conclusions that Jesus strongly condemns and corrects. In that Gospel, we hear Jesus ask his disciples who they think he is. Peter identifies Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. But when Jesus starts to speak about his future rejection, suffering, and death, Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes him. In Peter's way of thinking, the

Messiah was to be a person of power and authority who would restore the greatness of the Chosen People. In response, Jesus rebukes Peter. Jesus tells Peter that his thinking about the Messiah is wrong; it is not in line with God's thinking. Thinking as the world thought led Peter to misconstrue the mission of the Messiah. It led him to urge Jesus to abandon the path God had set for him.

As Christians we need to take care not to be overcome by wrong thinking. For we live in a society that abounds with wrong thinking that is opposed to the thinking of God. Our society has people who think that marriage can be redefined; that the family is a confining, societal construct that has outlived its usefulness; that sex is changeable; that unborn children have no rights; that drugs are recreational; that pornography is harmless; that moral standards are oppressive; that religion and belief in God are for the feeble-minded; that wealth and social status convey wisdom; and that human rights are granted by governments and do not come from God. When such thinking enters our minds, our faith - our thinking as God does - can begin to change. This change in thinking then begins to affect our actions. We start to act not as Christians who strive to live as Jesus did, but

as people who act according to the wrong thinking that Satan sows in our world.

Wrong thinking led Peter to try and dissuade Jesus from his mission. Wrong thinking led men to carry out murderous acts on September 11. If we are not careful, wrong thinking can lead us into evil, it can lead us into sinful behavior.

In your service, prayerfully.

Father John Carlos