

## 12c

I don't know if you've heard the story about the chicken and the pig. It goes like this: The chicken said: "You know those people in that house down there". "Yes, I do" says the pig. "Aren't they very good to us"? "They are indeed", says the pig. "You know what I was thinking", says the chicken. "What's that", says the pig. "I was thinking we should pay back their kindness by giving them something". "A very good idea", says the pig. "What did you have in mind"? "I was thinking that we should give them bacon and eggs". "Hold it right there" said the pig. "For you that's only a little inconvenience but for me it's total commitment"

Enduring the Cross was for Jesus total abandonment to His Father's will. From a cursory reading of the gospel one of His persistent temptations was that he would embark on an ego trip and not renounce himself. If He had given in to the Tempter in the desert he would have become somebody in the eyes of the world which was not His Father's will. If you remember, Satan promised Him all the kingdoms of the world if He'd fall on His knees and worship him. When the people tried to make Him a worldly King after he fed the 5000 the scripture tells us he withdrew from the crowd and escaped back into the hills by himself.

Jesus says, "Anybody who wants to be a follower of mine must renounce himself". I know we don't worship idols carved in stone anymore but we could easily put ourselves at the centre of our own little universe where God takes a back seat in my life, if any seat at all.

We'll know what idols we have if we study our feelings. What gets me upset? What gives me a boost? What rattles my cage so easily? What brings on feelings of anxiety? Who or what is pressing us into believing we're somebody we don't need to be? Why am I so preoccupied with image that I lose my equilibrium and peace of mind. Being a slave to such idols

means that I have still a long way to go before I've renounced myself. The person who is full up of themselves has little room for God.

The people who have not yet renounced themselves are usually more concerned about what pleases others than what pleases God. If Jesus were worried about such things he would never have endured the cross. In chapter 5 of St John's Gospel Jesus says: "Human approval means nothing to me". And again He says: "I only do what pleases Him", meaning God, His Father. But from a purely human point of view, doing His Father's will was the least appealing option. He castigated the Pharisees for turning religion into a show to boost their own ego leaving the heart unmoved. He also told them 'not to proclaim their good deeds before men only to attract their notice'. Sigmund Freud called our craving for human recognition, the superego. It's precisely that's which we need to renounce in ourselves.

*Self-renunciation is a constant grind, an uphill struggle. It is not a one off occurrence. It's the Cross which Jesus asks us to carry every day. In our prayers we are given strength to move away from reliance on self to reliance on God. Relinquishing my life for the sake of Christ and his gospel means I keep it for Life Eternal.*