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Today is the feast of St Margaret Clitheroe. When the 30 year old Margaret, the butcher's wife of York, was taken to court in 1586 accused of 'sheltering catholic priests' on the run she refused to plead guilty or not guilty. She declared that she had committed no crime and she would not plead 'not guilty' because if she did, the prosecution planned to put her children in the witness box to subject them to cross-questioning. As a mother she would not allow her children to feel later that they had caused their mother's death. Now that's a lesson in self-renunciation.

Last Sunday Peter was on the 'crest of a wave' when Jesus made him head of the church but today he's gone from hero to zero. He tries to turn Jesus away from the self-renunciation of the Cross and so is compared to Satan. If Jesus had turned away from the Cross then Satan would have won the day because it was through his self-sacrifice on the cross that he atoned for our sins and achieved our salvation.

The great journey which we're all are asked to make in life is that which takes us away from self-absorption towards self-renunciation. The unique irony about Christianity is that, in order for me to save my life I must first lose it. But who wants to do that?

If we turn a deaf ear to the message of today's gospel, self-indulgence might easily take over. There is a lot of it around these days. St Paul today warns us not to 'model ourselves on the behaviour of the world around us'. I saw a disturbing programme on the telly some time ago about burdening and confusing young children with gender theories in primary schools which Pope Francis says is 'destructive of children'. It

sounds like God made a mistake in fashioning us as male and female and we need to correct his error. That equates to renouncing God in place of renouncing ourselves.

In order to take up our cross every day and follow Jesus, we'll need to earnestly ask the Holy Spirit to pour this self-sacrificing love into our hearts.

We're not talking here about becoming a door-mat for everyone or allowing ourselves to be continually 'taken for granted'. But 'keeping ourselves to ourselves' doesn't sound like self-renunciation either. Watching from the side-lines, as it were, and as catholic Christians not getting involved in issues which the church sees as important, is another form of self-absorption. I know the present pandemic is not good in itself but it has brought out the best in people by getting them involved in helping their neighbours in need.

Another form of self-renunciation is when we stand up for Christian values which may put our preconceived ways of thinking and acting on its head. Saint Margaret Clitherow could easily have saved her skin if she didn't harbour 'catholic priests' on the run. She was given every enticement to do so, but stood firm to the end.

Self-renunciation should be our abiding Christian witness. Without it our Christianity would be a charade and the surest way to make it redundant. But we are reassured by Our Lord's own words – 'anyone who loses his life for my sake will keep it for Eternal Life'.