

Jesus aside and argue with him. Jesus' response is to rebuke Peter in words that must have shaken him to the core: "Get behind me, Satan!" Peter is playing the devil's game, trying to dissuade Jesus from the path he must tread – a path that, humanly speaking, he would much rather avoid. Yet he goes forward boldly towards Jerusalem and certain death.

Alexander the Great, one of the greatest military leaders of all time, once made an eleven-day forced march with his troops. They were exhausted and almost dying of thirst. Some of the soldiers managed to collect water from a stream in a helmet and took it to their leader. After a moment's hesitation, Alexander handed the helmet back, its contents untouched. He wouldn't ask his men to do anything he wouldn't do himself. His action had an electrifying effect: with a leader like this, the soldiers could overcome weariness and thirst. Indeed, says the writer who recorded this incident, they looked upon themselves "as little less than immortal".

### Application

Today Jesus is putting the question to us: Who do you say I am? Do you accept me as your leader? I tell you the truth: being my true followers means you must deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow me, though I assure you I will never ask you to do anything that I am not prepared to do. I know that following me can sometimes seem like a kind of dying. But through my death and resurrection, which you are celebrating at this Mass, I assure you that victory is yours.

Alexander's soldiers may have thought they were immortal; but if we are faithful followers of Jesus Christ we are immortal. Though we must die in this world, we are destined for a heavenly life of a richness and fullness we've never known before, life never marred by tears or sorrows, but a life of perfect joy and one that lasts for ever. This is no good news/bad news story. This is sheer good news – the best news the world has ever heard.