

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introduction

Suffering enters the life of everyone; as Christians we are invited to recognise it as an invitation to share in the cross of Christ.

Penitential Act (Ask for God's forgiveness and mercy.)

Recite the Gloria

Today's Readings

First Reading Jeremiah 20:7-9

Though Jeremiah feels that the Lord has deceived him, he knows that he must proclaim the prophetic message of what is to come.

Second Reading Romans 12:1-2

Paul urges us to follow the will of God, not the fashions of the world.

Gospel Matthew 16:21-27

Jesus makes it clear that there is a price to be paid for following him.

HOMILY FOR THE 22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

"There seemed to be a fire burning in my heart."

"No wonder you have so few friends, Lord: you treat them all so badly." It was St Teresa of Avila who made that remark. It is a remark that is widely known, because it rings a bell for so many of us. Often those who strive generously to serve God seem to get more than their fair share of suffering and hardship.

Take Jeremiah. He never wanted to be a prophet but found there was no way of evading the divine call. To use his own bold, even shocking, language: God seduced him, overpowered him, deceived him. He finds himself addressing people who will not listen to him, who ridicule him, even punish him in the stocks. No wonder he is tempted to say: "I'll just not think about God anymore." But he can't do it, because, as he explains, "There seemed to be a fire burning in my heart"; it was the fire of his love for God and it made the prophet carry on his apparently hopeless task.

It is not only God's friends who have to suffer, but even God's own Son. In the Gospel we see Jesus revealing to the disciples the anguish he feels as he sets out for Jerusalem, knowing that opposition, rejection, an appalling death await him there. Peter is shocked and cries out: "Heaven preserve you, Lord... This must not happen to you." Jesus' response may seem harsh: "Get behind me, Satan... the way you think is not God's way but men." Jesus had given his apostle Simon the new name of Peter, which means "rock"; but now he calls him "Satan".

The sharpness of the reply reveals how deeply Jesus dreads what lies ahead. “Can’t you see,” he seems to say, “my task is hard enough without you playing the devil’s game too?” Like Jeremiah before him, Jesus shrinks from the suffering his mission will entail. So why does he go through with it? It is because of the fire of love for his Father and for us that burns in his heart; that is what leads him to march steadfastly on to Jerusalem and to the cross.

The cross slips into our lives, too, in all kinds of ways. Sometimes in small or predictable ones: like bad weather when we expected sunshine; the inevitable aches and pains of getting old; the sacrifice and unselfishness involved in bringing up a family. At other times, the cross can come in devastating form – a frightening outcome to an X-ray, the death of a dear one. A young woman of faith who lost her husband in a traffic accident cried out in her grief, “You sometimes wonder if God knows what he’s doing.” Most of us have experienced that feeling. We would all like a Christianity without the cross, but a Christianity without the cross would not be Christianity at all. Jesus tells us: “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him... take up his cross and follow me.” Not only is he indicating that, in one way or another, the shadow of the cross will fall across our lives, he is also reminding us that he has gone before us in the way of suffering.

An early Christian writer compared Jesus to a mother who takes a spoonful of her child's medicine in order to encourage her little one to do the same; it's her way of saying, “See, there is nothing to fear from the nasty-tasting concoction, in fact it's going to do you good.” Jesus wants us to know that just as the cross is the supreme proof of his love, so our gracious acceptance of the cross in our lives can be the finest proof of our love for him. There may be times when, like Jeremiah, we rebel. But, please God, even then, like Jeremiah, we will experience that fire of love in our hearts which will lead us once again to fall in behind Jesus, our friend and leader.

At every Mass, we celebrate the Jesus who not only died but also rose again (resurrection is the other side of the cross), and who we believe will one day, in St Paul's words, “repay each one as [their] works deserve”. On that day his friends will discover what, deep down in their hearts, they have always known: that if at times God seems to treat them badly, yet God loves them dearly and holds in store for them a reward infinitely exceeding all that they have suffered in the Lord's name.

Summary

1. So often suffering seems to be the lot of those who love God, not only of the prophets, but even of God's only Son.
2. Jesus warned that his followers are called to shoulder the cross if they wish to follow him.
3. If we courageously follow the example of Jesus the fire of love will burn brightly in our hearts.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL FOR THE 22ND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Leader of the Family:

Like the psalmist raising hands in prayer,
we lift up our hearts confidently to the God
who receives our petitions,
as we respond, 'Lord, hear our prayer'.

Member of the Family:

1. We pray for our spiritual leaders:
that by word and example they may show us
how to accept suffering in the spirit of Christ.
We pray to the Lord...
2. We pray for nurses, doctors, health workers, scientist
and all who look after those who are sick,
and those seeking a cure:
that they may come to see that in caring for others
they are caring for Christ himself.
We pray to the Lord...
3. We pray for our persecuted brothers, sisters,
and those coping with Covid-19,
in every part of the world:
that they may persevere in faith and courage,
and that their trust in God will never fail.
We pray to the Lord...
4. We pray for human traffickers, for drug pushers
and for all who cause harm to others:
that they may recognise the evil they do
and be brought to a change of heart.
We pray to the Lord...

Leader of the Family:

Lord God, as we give thanks for the example of your Son,
we pray that we may have courage
to follow him as true disciples;
we make our prayers through the same Christ our Lord. Amen!!!

Recite the Our Father (

Reflect on what are we thankful for in this past week.

Final Blessing (*Said by Leader of the Family.*)

May the Father enable you to trust him
amidst all life's troubles.

May the Son help you to accept lovingly
whatever may be involved in following him.

May the Holy Spirit strengthen you
so that you never doubt God's undying love for you.

Make the Sign of the Cross +