

We often believe that the Christian faith is a solution to our problems, and we understand it as a pleasant way to make nice people even nicer, and as a way to make our life more fulfilling. Since the very beginning of Salvation History, God has called all human beings to live in communion, to love one other, to constantly be reminded of this truth: Each human being has been created in the image and likeness of God. God loves us and calls us to love Him back. Love is the flame that can make this world a better place. But today, Jesus introduces himself, not as an instrument of communion, but as one of divisions. He is basically telling us that He is a troublemaker. His message of love will not always be welcomed. His call to love one another will always find opposition. If we don't control our sinful desires, it is easy to see each other as enemies, to feel superior to others, and to create reasons to hate one another.

In our contemporary world, many voices call us to judge each other by the color of the skin, origins, religious beliefs, and the list goes on. While we believe that Christians are to imitate the communion of love between God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, constantly other voices call us to be divided, to hate, and to eliminate from our societies those considered different or outsiders. If we are worried about the hate and violence that we have in the world, today's Gospel may give us some reassurance. Jesus tells his disciples that his message will cause divisions at all levels. And Jesus himself will be condemned to die for a message that calls humanity to live like brothers and sisters. But Christ's death and resurrection will be the way for Jesus to conquer the powers of death and to conquer all divisions.

Through our Baptism, we are called to participate in the world's salvation: We are not simply called to work for our own personal getting into heaven. And Jesus warns us that discipleship in his name involves a trial by fire, divisions, and trouble. So, what is the message of this text of the Gospel for us? Jesus has come to set the earth on fire. This fire is the energy of love. Love will bring God's creation into perfection. God continues to bring this imperfect, broken and wounded world into perfection through his perfect love. And he calls us to leave everything and to follow Him. This morning we have left behind some of our relatives and friends and some distractions and comforts of the world to be here. The fire of love makes us followers, people of hope. We have around us people who are racist, people who hate others, people who resist the call to love and to be loved. And some of them are very close to us. We have around us people who believe that through violence and hate we can build up better societies, better communities. Some of them hate us because we believe that a better world will never be possible through the ways of violence and injustice.

Our hope is that God will fulfill his promises, with or without us. This world will come into the perfection to which it was created. So, it is time to act as troublemakers, filling the world with the fire of God's love. It is time to manifest God's power, through our actions of kind love. It is time to defend our children and youth from the menaces of a society that leads them to embrace immorality. It is time to speak about the injustice that we support when we are indifferent to the needs of our neighbor. It is time to proclaim by all means, that hate and violence will never stop the suffering and injustice that we have in today's world. We know some people will hate us. We know our beliefs will bring divisions. But Jesus, the Divine Troublemaker, tells us today, that in the divine saving plan, We are either with Him, or against Him.

The Universal Prayer
Sunday 17th August 2025
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, the presence of Jesus in our world has always brought division among people, because his truth is not understood, his love is rejected, and his sacrifice is ridiculed.

1. For Pope Leo, that his constant appeals for peace in the world will be responded to by nations and individuals.

We pray to the Lord.

2. For those who are prophets of faith, justice, and mercy, that as they endure ridicule, rejection and persecution for the sake of the gospel, they will remain faithful to Jesus.

We pray to the Lord.

3. For each other that we will never lose sight of Jesus, but keep on running steadily the race we have started with great hope.

We pray to the Lord.

4. For renewed efforts to bring a ceasefire to the wars across the Holy Land and between Ukraine and Russia, that the Holy Spirit will guide all people toward peace.

We pray to the Lord.

5. For the Ukrainian children kidnapped by Russia, the hostages held captive by Hamas, the Palestinian, Ukrainian and Russian prisoners of war, that all will be reunited with their families.

We pray to the Lord.

6. For our sisters and brothers who live with fear, distress, and for those who feel abandoned or forgotten.

We pray to the Lord.

7. For all who have died with faith, that they will see the face and glory of Jesus in joy.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Almighty God, draw from the deadly pit of oppression, violence and despair all who suffer at this time; set them upon the rock of your truth and love, that they may rejoice in you, their rescuer.
Through Christ our Lord.