

22nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME-A: Jer 20:7–9; Rom 12:1–2; Mat 16:21–27: FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

When Jeremiah began his ministry, the people of Israel had become so hardened in their sinful ways that they no longer believed in God nor feared Him. Jeremiah preached for many years, and not once did he see any real success in changing or softening the hearts and minds of his stubborn and idolatrous people. He gave them fair warnings, but the people ignored him and eventually suffered disaster. They lost everything. Their nation was torn apart, their temple was destroyed, and their leaders were carried off into captivity by their enemies.

In spite of all this, Jeremiah responded to the invitation of God. He presented himself to God as a willing sacrifice, and God took hold of him and filled his heart with His Word. The Word of God became like a fire burning within him, so much so that Jeremiah could no longer resist speaking in the name of God Most High.

God assured Jeremiah of His assistance if he would obey His Word. Jeremiah had doubts. He suffered. He felt alone. He experienced rejection and even death threats. At times, he wondered where God was and whether he had been deceived. Yet he says, ***“There is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot.”*** He could not remain silent. He had to proclaim the Word of God.

Through Jeremiah, we learn that it is not always easy to respond to God's call. Obeying God does not mean that life will be free from suffering. But the Lord will always find a way to bring us closer to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the second reading, St. Paul appeals to us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Our lives must be meant to please the Lord. We must submit ourselves to God without resistance and without reservation. To present our bodies as a living sacrifice means to surrender our faculties, our desires, our thoughts, our plans—in fact, the totality of our being—to God. It is total surrender. And this total surrender is essential for a life of righteousness, joy, peace, and victory in Christ. St. Paul reminds us that we must not conform ourselves to this world, but be transformed according to the will of God. If we live only for ourselves, our own desires, and our own plans, then we are not truly living for God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus rebukes Peter because Peter tries to assert his own will against the will of God. Peter had just professed Jesus as the Son of God, but he still did not fully understand what that meant.

When Jesus speaks about going to Jerusalem, suffering, and dying, Peter cannot accept it. He wants Jesus to avoid the cross. But Jesus responds strongly: ***“You are an obstacle in my path, because you are thinking not as God thinks, but as human***

beings do.” God's call is not only about participating in His glory. It also means participating in His suffering.

This is what Christ Himself did. He offered Himself as a living sacrifice. He submitted everything without reluctance for our salvation. Jesus did not live for Himself. He lived for God the Father who sent Him, and He died doing the Father's will. Therefore, Jesus tells us: ***“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”***

To deny ourselves means making the choice to replace our own desires, thoughts, and plans with God's thoughts and purposes. It means learning to put God first and to consider others before ourselves. Taking up our cross is an expressed willingness to be His followers and His witnesses, even when following Christ is difficult. But here is the Good News: Jesus does not ask us to do this alone.

When we deny ourselves and take up our cross in order to follow Him, Jesus Himself is with us. He leads us. He strengthens us. He helps us do what He asks of us. Without Jesus, carrying the cross would be far too difficult. But He invites us ***to follow Him***, which means to walk with Him.

While we live in this world, we are not meant to belong to this world. We are pilgrims on our journey toward eternal life. Our lives are not simply for our own comfort, success, or pleasure. We are here for the glory of God.

Like Jeremiah, may the Word of God burn within us. Like St. Paul teaches us, may we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. And like Jesus, may we have the courage to surrender ourselves completely to the will of the Father. And as we carry our crosses and follow Christ, let us never forget: we do not walk alone. Jesus walks with us, leads us, and brings us toward the eternal glory for which we were created. Amen