



Twenty-second Sunday Ordinary Time 2005.

Jeremiah 20: 7-9 Romans 12: 1-2 Matthew 16: 21-27

Should holy people complain?

“You conned me God, and I fell for it.

Now everyone is laughing at me.

...I tell myself, “That’s enough, no more teaching in his name,”

then I can’t help myself, a fire burns within me and I can’t hold it in.”

Jeremiah experienced the unfairness that is part of the good person’s life.

“Why me?” We hear this cry everywhere. We’ve said it ourselves. Sometimes we feel good about our discipleship, we can sing, “Everything’s going my way”. Then come the moments when we stumble. We see the values of big business penetrating even the leadership of the church. We hear cries for justice from our leaders while ignoring their own injustice to many groups.

Jeremiah echoes our grief and also the grief of God.

Last Sunday’s reading had Peter on a high, “You are the Christ the Son of the living God.” Peter’s image of God was of a God detached from the suffering of humanity, not the God of the prophets. When Jesus indicated to his disciples that he would suffer and die this was too much for Peter.

The dialogue of Peter with Jesus is reminiscent of the encounter of Jesus with Satan the Tempter.

“If you are the Son of God throw yourself down, the angels will catch you. (Mtt 4:6)”
As Jesus had rejected this challenge to test God so he now rejects Peter’s suggestion, he calls Peter, Satan.

The motif of temptation is repeated for a third time in the passion narrative. This time “Satan”, the tempter is Jesus’ own fear.

“My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me...

This cry from Jesus is a reminder to us that Jesus was just like us. When deep suffering or death faces us all our pious promises of undying fidelity count for little our first cry is that of a child, “Why didn’t you save me?”

Jesus prayer doesn’t not end with the plea to be rescued he continues, “But not as I wish, but as you do.”

This is the Jesus’ prayer. “Not my will but your will be done.”

As the prophets knew that their journey was one of painful tension between proclaiming the Word of God and facing the negative responses of the people they challenged so too did Jesus know that to challenge those who hold power over a

community is to court pain. Therefore he understood that the religious authorities, whose life-styles, values and interpretation of their religious tradition he challenged, would seek to silence him. The Gospel writers with the benefit of history were able to add the explicit details of his dying.

The short reading from the letter to the Romans is a plea from Paul to remain faithful to the Gospel. The meaning of *sacrifice*, is to make holy or to dedicate. In this passage Paul is comparing the faithful disciple to a place of worship dedicated to God. We carry within ourselves the blueprint of Christ. Therefore resist the lure of the values of a society that doesn't understand the Gospel. Only a renewal of your mind and spirit will give you the skills to discern the mind of God.

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