

24th Ordinary Sunday
September 12, 2021
“Duplicity or Integrity?”

Is 50:4-9
Jas 2:14-18
Mk 8:27-35

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Why is there so much duplicity in our modern society? How is it that many people of prominence say things that they don't mean? How can they pretend to be someone who they are not? Why do so many in leadership make claims that do not square with reality and truth?

For example, we have politicians who promise what they never deliver – They say something – and later deny what they said – or say that we misunderstood their words. Consequently, we have national leaders who insist that they are devout Catholics – Yet, they do not follow Catholic teaching which is based on the Gospel and over two thousand years of tradition. Hence, they are “pro-abortion”, “pro capital punishment”, “pro enhanced interrogation techniques”, “pro same-sex marriage”, and “gender identity change”!

It is unfortunate that political leaders are ruled by what will please their constituencies and get them votes. Their position, prestige, and power are more important than what is right, good, and best for the nation and the world. Above all, they don't want to suffer in any way, especially in their egos – And they don't want to suffer for what is in the realm of God – for what God asks everyone one of us to become.

The scriptures for today teach us that people of true faith – people who truly try to live the way that God wants us to live – will always have to suffer. Isaiah tells those exiles in Babylon who remained faithful – the few who did not embrace the pagan culture – that their suffering is not in vain. God will remember them. God will send a champion who will liberate them on the day of reckoning – when it comes. However, their champion will suffer the greatest atrocities – But he – and they – will be exonerated when justice finally reigns!

St. Mark tells us that Jesus is the one who was promised. When Jesus asked the disciples who he really was, Peter proclaimed him the Christ – the Anointed One – the Messiah!

However, to avoid any misunderstanding, Jesus made it very clear the kind of Messiah God had sent. He would have to endure terrible things to accomplish his mission from God. He would suffer greatly – He would be rejected by the powerful in national, religious leadership – And he would be killed. However, after three days, he would rise.

Peter must not have heard the last statement because he objected vehemently. This did not fit his personal plans and dreams for Jesus and for his own future. Peter wanted a good life here – a life without pain, suffering, broken dreams, and failed plans.

Understanding this, Jesus reprimanded Peter and called him Satan – Furthermore, he insisted that pain and suffering are part of everyone’s journey to God. Jesus revealed that we must never reject what is right and good and best because we want to avoid hardship and pain. In fact, the greatest paradox of a life of true faith is that we must lose our life of comfort and self-will in order to find our true life with God! Moreover, if we live – with only our life here in our mind and heart – we will, surely, lose our “true” life – our eternal life – and our relationship with God!

St. James puts this teaching in another way. If we have authentic faith – if we have a true relationship with God – whom we cannot see – then we must prove it by doing the works of God – which are good deeds and works that can be seen. These must be the works of the Gospel – the imperatives by which Jesus says we must live!

Consequently, there can be no duplicity in our own lives. We can’t pretend we are living the Gospel. We can’t think we are devout Catholics if we reject what Catholics are required to accept and believe. Thus, if we deny life to the unborn – If we want to eradicate those who have done terrible things – If we believe that sex is something for personal exploitation – If we do nothing for the poor and those rejected by society – Then we can’t pretend that we are devout Catholics and followers of Jesus. Nor should we present ourselves for Communion with no thought or prayer for conversion and repentance.

Brothers and Sisters, we all are unfinished – We all are imperfect – We all are sinners – We all fail in so many ways. Let us pray, today, for personal honesty and integrity. May we admit to God and to ourselves who we really are. And may God help us to make whatever changes are necessary to work for what is right and good and best in His kingdom!

Amen.

September 12, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra