

20th Ordinary Sunday
August 18, 2019
“God’s Way: A New Creation”

Jer 38:4...10
Heb 12:1-4
Lk 12:49-53

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

It is both amazing and utterly tragic the way that so many people are unwilling to face reality. We don’t like that what we discover is certainly before us. We don’t want to face the difficulty, the struggle, and the pain of doing what, deep down, we know we truly must do. And, as a consequence, we talk ourselves into what we want. We attempt to avoid what is facing us at all costs. And we even try to manipulate others and the world around us into what we want it to be.

Consequently, most politicians and many leadership people will distort the truth, tell only half the truth, or even outright lie. They do this to get the support of their constituents. What is paramount for them is to get their way and serve themselves no matter what the cost to their integrity! We do this in our own families and circle of relationships when we force our own way or not admit the truth of our failure or mistake in some area!

In the first reading for today, Jerusalem had been under siege by the army of Babylon. Because the Chosen People had not fulfilled what God had asked, they had to bear the consequences. Many of the soldiers and many of the common folk believed Jeremiah and his messages over the years. But most of the leadership did not!

So they condemned Jeremiah for speaking the truth. They didn’t dare kill him outright, so they staged his death by attempting to starve him in the deep cistern. As a consequence, they soon paid a terrible price. Many were killed; their city reduced to rubble; they lost their freedoms; and they were exiled to Babylon!

In the Gospel selection, Jesus knew that he was called to a terrifying mission. That mission was to change the course of history and the direction of the whole human race – back to God. He came to burn away all the old ways, the old ideas, thoughts, and behaviors – and begin a whole new creation! He came to separate the gold of our God-made humanity from the dross, the slag, the debris that encrusts us! His baptism would be one of “overwhelming catastrophe” for himself! Moreover, he was in anguish until he got it done

for our salvation!

Then Jesus goes on to teach us that the peace he brings is not world peace, but peace in our deepest self – in our heart and soul. Moreover, acceptance of his Gospel message will divide people, even in our families. It will put at odds those who believe and follow his ways from those who do not! Certainly, all of us know someone who has suffered because others or family reject them for what they believe and how they live.

Nevertheless, the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that we are not alone in our commitment and faithfulness to Jesus and his Gospel. Millions have witnessed before us, and are now in the presence of God. This includes those in our own time who have been killed for their beliefs in the Middle East and elsewhere! Yet in the Western World, we have not even come close to what they have suffered – We have not had to shed blood or die for what we believe!

Brothers and Sisters, it's always tempting to manipulate others and shade the truth when we want something. It's so difficult for us not to want our own way instead of God's way. It's so easy to believe that our reality is God's reality – And that our thoughts and ways are God's thoughts and ways.

The hardest thing is to break with the past – with our old sins, behaviors, or our own limited thoughts and plans. It's challenging to abandon ourselves to God – and let God truly work in our hearts and lives. But what Jesus promises is a peace that surpasses all understanding in our hearts and minds.

So, let us pray, today, that somehow, with God's grace – we can become this new creation which Jesus came to establish!

Amen.

August 18, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra