

[Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10; Psalm 40; Hebrews 12:1-4; Luke 12:49-53]

When confronted with this particular Gospel text, I asked a priest friend of mine, “Jesus hits all of the intergenerational family feuds except one: Where are the fathers-in-law and the sons-in-law?” He replied rather quickly, “They’re probably in their man-cave having a beer and watching the Big Game!”

The words of Jesus ring like an ominous prediction. The world IS ablaze right now. The war and conflict in the Middle East, in Ukraine and in parts of Africa and South America – Pope Francis called it “World War Three in bits and pieces” – is boiling over. Scores of people – hundreds of many innocent bystanders – are killed and thousands are wounded. Businesses, churches, mosques, places of government are all ablaze.

There are “jihad” religionists of every ideological stripe – among Christians and Jews and not just among Muslims.

The American bishops have asked all parishes in the United States to take up a special collection to assist our brothers and sisters in Gaza. Archbishop Wiesenburger is asking all parishes to take up a special collection this weekend and/or next weekend to ease the strife in Gaza. In the past, we simply dedicated 10% of our Sunday collection for any special emergency collections, since we don't have any special envelopes for that collection, and not enough ushers to “pass the basket.” We will do the same here.

If you wish to give more, please make out your checks to St. Martin de Porres Parish, and under the memo line, be sure to write Gaza Relief. You can put it into the Sunday Offering boxes near

the church exits. They will be kept separate from the Sunday collection.

All funds from this special collection will be remitted to one of two charities: “**Catholic Relief Services**” who are on site and partnering with local Church entities to provide food, shelter, financial assistance, hygiene supplies, and trauma assistance; or “**Catholic Near East Welfare Association**” who are providing vital emergency humanitarian relief and medical care for the sick, malnourished, and wounded. Your generosity is an opportunity to serve Christ Himself!

Do we have the wisdom, the courage and the strength to challenge the status quo in our lives, knowing that it will lead to division?

Today’s Second Reading reminds us that day-to-day living can be for us an endurance test in which the Christian virtues are severely examined. We know that pain and suffering come to all of us, whether we are good or bad, rich or poor.

One author, M. Scott Peck, in his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, says: “Life is difficult.” Then he goes on to say, “Once we accept that life is difficult, it’s not so difficult.” It IS more difficult for those who think it shouldn’t be so. “Why is this happening to ME?”

It’s all about our attitude, isn’t it? We see in life what we want to see. If you want to find ugliness, you will find plenty of it.

If you want to find fault with life, you will find plenty of it.

But the opposite is also true. Most days, I feel like I’m on top of the world as a priest and as a pastor; other days, I feel like saying, “move over, Jeremiah, and make some room for me!” What makes the difference?

Faith. That's what brings you here every Sunday. You humble me and you inspire me by your presence here for Mass each week. I know some of your stories and the burdens that you carry that test your faith. Yet you still come.

We echo the words of the Psalmist in our Responsorial Psalm: "The Lord heard my cry. He drew me out of the pit of destruction, out of the mud of the swamp (like Jeremiah?)... He made firm my steps and he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God... Many shall look on in awe and trust in the Lord."

You look on in awe at what happens at the altar when God Himself is called down on humble bread and wine to become Jesus Christ, real and present.

A second grader, after making his First Holy Communion, said to me, "I felt the grace of Jesus going up and down my body in my blood." When was the last time you and I felt like that after having received Holy Communion?

Our Second Reading also reminds me of one of my most favorite images. Did you know that every time we gather for Mass in the Catholic Church, the whole Communion of Saints is with us?

Imagine us here, with hundreds of thousands of saints, and the souls of our faithful relatives who have gone before us cheering us on. You do not journey alone. We are indeed "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses" cheering us on to persevere, to keep the faith, and to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Households continue to be divided by the Gospel today. Parents may commit themselves to the Faith, while children wander away from it. One spouse embraces the Way; the other is skeptical,

apathetic or even antagonistic. In our Domestic Church and in our world-wide Church there are found passionate commitment, simple sincerity, hesitation and doubt, and half-hearted membership.

Your questions for this week: Where are YOU on the “Faith on Fire” spectrum? Passionate commitment? Simple sincerity? Plagued by hesitation and doubt? Half-hearted membership? The fire is blazing. Not all will choose to be kindled by it.

Because each one of us has been given by God that awful and dangerous gift of our free will. The choice to believe or not believe, to act or not to act is yours. So, in the words of that famous theologian Elvis Presley: “Burn, baby, burn with a hunka-hunka-burning love” for Jesus Christ and for His Church! AMEN!