

14TH SUNDAY ORD. (C)

WHAT DO I WANT TO ACHIEVE IN LIVING MY LIFE?

We pursue certain careers because of what we want to achieve in life. In the same way, we decide to be Christians because we have something in mind. Even though they seem to be two different ways of life, they complement each other, since one cannot separate his spiritual life from ordinary life. All point to one direction at the end of our lives - being saved or condemned. But salvation does not come cheap; it involves mourning and being poor in spirit. Today's liturgy, brings us hope, and helps us to know what to do to bring us the greatest fulfilment of what we desire to achieve.

Israel was promised prosperity and comfort from the Lord God. She would be carried like a child in its mother's arms. This would be experienced by all who mourned with her and loved her. Those who shared in her sorrows would share in her joy.

St. Paul's greatest desire was to share in the sufferings of Christ which he knew would bring him salvation. He did not want to boast except in the sufferings of Christ. And he considered his sufferings as a completion of the sufferings of Christ; (Col.1:24). He realized that there was no need to be circumcised; what was, and is important is to be a new creation. "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation," (2Cor.5:17).

Before the disciples were sent to preach the gospel, they were informed of what awaited them. They were like lambs among wolves, and they were to take nothing with them. They were also told that they would be rejected. They returned with great joy because they felt they had achieved great success, but their master, Jesus told them to rejoice not over earthly success but that their names were written in heaven.

Is my greatest desire to share in the joy of Jerusalem? Do I want to be a new creation? And do I want to have my name written in heaven? If these are what I am desiring to achieve then I have to consider what I do now and how I live my life. St. Paul told the Philippians: "For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things...that I may gain Christ and be found in Him; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead," (Phil.3:8-11).

Is the wish of St. Paul my wish as well? Then I have to reflect on what role the word of God can play in my life. If I receive the word of God, I gain peace; if I reject it I suffer for it. It is a curse not to receive the message of Christ brought to me, as we heard in the gospel of what will come upon those who reject the messengers of Christ and their message, they will suffer more than what happened to Sodom. Unlike St. Paul, some of us find it difficult to accept the word and live by it because of intellectual pride like the scribes and the Pharisees; others because they want to hear something that sounds sweet in their ears. We don't want to hear anything that convicts us that will help us to change our lives.

But the message of Christ to be delivered is that “the kingdom of God is at hand for you”. It is offered freely without charge. What is required is to strive to be a new creation. Last week we were told that we are called to freedom; today we are to receive the message which will bring us peace.