

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 3, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9

You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped;
you were too strong for me, and you triumphed.
All the day I am an object of laughter;
everyone mocks me.

Whenever I speak, I must cry out,
violence and outrage is my message;
the word of the LORD has brought me
derision and reproach all the day.

I say to myself, I will not mention him,
I will speak in his name no more.
But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart,
imprisoned in my bones;
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.

Psalm: Ps 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

R. (2b) My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God whom I seek;
for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts
like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary
to see your power and your glory,
For your kindness is a greater good than life;
my lips shall glorify you.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Thus will I bless you while I live;
lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name.
As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be
satisfied,
and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

You are my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.
My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay all according to his conduct."



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 3, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Jesus has a variety of names for Simon Peter. But this week's is a big surprise. Last week, in the Gospel, he retired the name "Simon" and replaced it with the name Peter. And so I say to you, you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it (Mt 16:18). At root the name Peter means "rock." Simon is to be a "Rock," a foundation of the church. This week, Jesus bestows on Peter an entirely different name altogether. He calls Peter, "Satan." (Gospel) If this name were to stick, Peter would be the leader of the very "netherworld" that would prevail against the church, contrary to Jesus' promise above. What has happened?

First, it is clear that Jesus' emotional state has changed. He is obviously dreading the suffering and death that he tells them he will soon have to face. His rebuke to Peter is so sharp, so instant, so contradictory, that its emotional roots are showing. It is a snappish jibe at Peter and even includes name-calling! Jesus seems to sense what a terrible toll human misery and affliction will take on himself. Second, Jesus had been gradually schooling the disciples about who he really is. Not just a great teacher or good friend or magnetic preacher, but the complete revelation of divine love. They achieved their first high mark last week when Peter said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." In this week's Gospel, Jesus shows the real meaning of Christly love. For the good of the world he must suffer greatly under the rulers and be killed, and on the third day be raised. It is the first time, at least in Matthew's gospel, that he has mentioned crucifixion. Shouldn't they have been able to understand, or at least begin to understand, the real meaning of Jesus as "the Christ"? No. The gospel reports that Peter "rebuked" Jesus. "No, no, no, no, Lord, we will protect you—this will not happen to you, please don't worry so much. Everything will be ok, you'll see. We need you to be alive. I already said that you are the Christ! Use your powers!" This is an impulsive response, very human. But Peter is telling Jesus to avoid pain by selfish use of his powers! This is just what the devil had seduced him to in the desert temptations! (Matthew 4:1-11) When Jesus was hungry, Satan's stealth said, in essence, "You are Messiah! Why don't you simply turn some stones into bread? Or else have your angels save you from danger. In fact, be a real Messiah: take charge of all the lands there are. Why not?"

Because all of this would require bowing down and worshipping Satan's self-plan. To put it another way, Jesus would have to act according to the self-seeking, self-interested part of human nature. Go for the wealth, the power and the reputation. Forget Godly love. Since he was human, Jesus must have felt within himself the rewards that would come under such desert temptations. And he must feel it again this week as Peter gives him a similar enticement. So he reacts strongly. Does he really mean that Peter is Satan? No. But he remembers with pain the devil's temptations. No wonder the name of Satan slips out.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. How does Pope Francis' statement in the America interview relate to "It becomes like fire burning in my heart." from today's reading? *"Instead of being just a church that welcomes and receives by keeping the doors open, let us try also to be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step outside itself and go to those who do not attend Mass, to those who have quit or are indifferent. The ones who quit sometimes do it for reasons that, if properly understood and assessed, can lead to a return. But that takes audacity and courage. ... We need to proclaim the Gospel on every street corner, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing, even with our preaching, every kind of disease and wound."* *A Big Heart Open to God, Sept. 30, 2013*
2. Do you think Christ will use your suffering for the salvation of the world if you unite yours with his?
3. You cannot take your money and possessions with you when you die. If you "lose your life" in love for others, does that give you something to take with you? Is it the love in your heart that goes with you when you die?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen