

SUNDAY 22 OT. YEARA

The 1st reading from Jeremiah comes from a period 500 years B.C. He had a difficult task in warning the Jews about their destruction at the hands of the Babylonians. His people's reaction was to regard him as a traitor; however his prophesy did come about.

In the 2nd reading Paul has some tough words for the Romans. As Christians they must be prepared to accept suffering as a sacrifice to God- the message is the same for us today. Paul's message is not to be influenced by the world around us most meaningful as the world around us is completely immersed in secularism and modernism, as evidenced by the push for same sex marriage and euthanasia.

In the gospel Jesus has no time for Peter's concerns. Although Peter was the first to recognize Jesus as the

Messiah, he did not realize what that entailed. He probably imagined Jesus as a conquering Messiah, not a suffering one, hence, his reluctance to accept Jesus announcement concerning his suffering and death. This must not happen to you Lord he says. Jesus response is a sharp rebuke, get behind me Satan.

In saying this Jesus is letting Peter know that he must not be an obstruction to his destiny. He may also have been making Peter aware that his place was behind Jesus, a follower, not getting ahead of Jesus. After correcting Peter, Jesus outlines three conditions for his Disciples to follow:-

Deny yourself.

Meaning to evict all selfish thoughts, desires and tendencies from our hearts and letting God fill our hearts.

Take up your cross.

Meaning that following Jesus often entails pain and suffering which as Paul says we should offer as a living sacrifice to God.

Follow me.

We are all called to follow Jesus, living our lives according to the word of God, by obeying what is commanded by Jesus.

To follow someone who has asked us to take up our cross on a daily basis, may seem foolish to some but in the words of the late Archbishop Fulton Sheen:-
“To be a fool for Christ is the greatest compliment the world can give”.

Matthew was writing this gospel around 90 years after Christ, this was a dangerous time to be a Christian as persecution was rampant, he emphasizes Jesus teaching that a faithful follower may die for his faith, but in dying he will live. Those who risk everything for Christ find life. On the other hand

anyone who abandons their faith for safety sake may appear to live, but they are actually dying.

If we are to be true Disciples of Christ we must reach out to those less fortunate than ourselves, the sick, the hospitalized the poor. We must be humble in all things. Patient, forgiving and loving.

We need to abandon our lives to Jesus, let go of our attachment to materialism, the ever constant attachment to the supposed good things of life.

In essence we must realize that true happiness lies in getting behind Jesus and following Him in all aspects of our lives. Accepting what comes our way and offering up our troubles and sacrifices to God.