

September 3, 2023

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jer 20:7-9 | Rom 12:1-2 | Mt 16:21-27

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

I am glad I was duped. Yep, the illusionist in the show we attended had me fooled into seeing something one way and it turns out it was completely false. The show was entertaining, and worth the time and expense we invested to enjoy it. And ... it may be the only circumstance where the word “duped” can be used in the same sentence as “glad.” That certainly wasn’t Jeremiah’s experience! His prayer reflects frustration and hurt, and even a little bit of disgust at how he has been treated because of the Lord: “I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more.” But then, even in his discontent and disillusion, he holds on to the truth. For right after this rebellious admission, he confesses that the need to prophesy “becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.” He knows he was never really duped – there was no lie from the Lord. And the fact is, he believes and trusts in the Lord enough to pray to him in the first place; even in his prayer of lament he is praising the Lord as God and redeemer. Jeremiah’s example is a good one for us: Never lose sight of the Lord as our God. Pray to him; give over our frustrations to him; and allow him to be the fire burning in our heart that we cannot quench.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Reading today’s Gospel leaves me feeling awkward and even embarrassed for St. Peter. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, calling the first pope Satan and telling Peter to get behind him – *super* embarrassing, especially when Peter had good intentions in trying to protect Jesus. What’s the old saying, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”? There’s another axiom, a little less dire but just as pointed: “People judge you by your actions, not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold, but so does a hard-boiled egg.” Intentions matter – but how we enact and employ those intentions are important, too. Christ tells us in today’s Gospel, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Faith in God, believing in his promises, and wanting to obey his commandments are wonderful and essential – and they are the foundation of a life lived for Christ. But they are not the entirety of it, and while denying ourselves and taking up our cross is never easy, it is necessary. “What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” Christ asks. Let’s pray for the grace of pure intentions and the strength to live them in service to the Lord.

PRAY *Heavenly Father, uncover my eyes and reveal any obstacles keeping me from thinking as you do. Give me the courage to overcome these obstacles, and grant me the strength to take up my cross and follow you, even in the face of difficulty. I ask this through your Son, Christ our Lord.*

