



Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 18th August 2019

In England and Wales – Prayer for the people of Europe

Keynote: Jesus calls us to be disciples of witness

Prophet Jeremiah 38: 4-6, 8-10

With the city of Jerusalem under siege, the preaching of the prophet is not welcomed by the leaders of the city who recommend to the king that Jeremiah should be silenced. Hoping to accomplish this without bloodshed, *'they took Jeremiah and threw him into the well... there was no water in the well, only mud, and into the mud Jeremiah sank.'* He is surely to die. The role of prophet is not without its trials and tribulations. Speaking out for God, standing up for what is right, is not always easy, and sometimes being faithful to God brings danger. On this occasion, Jeremiah avoids death – for a foreigner comes out of the palace and pleads with the king, *'My Lord king, these men have done a wicked thing in treating Jeremiah like this: they have thrown him into the well where he will die.'* In speaking up for the prophet, this foreigner manages to get the king to issue a fresh command, *'Take three men with you from here and pull the prophet Jeremiah out of the well before he dies.'* There will be times when we might well speak out for justice and truth!

Responsorial Psalm 39 (40) – a confident cry for help to the Lord

Letter to the Hebrews 12: 1-4

'With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us... and keep running steadily in the race we have started.' The author recognises that Jesus has set an example of faith and of the endurance that is an essential quality of discipleship. *'Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which is still in the future.'* How do we give witness to Jesus? *'We too, should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily... and keep running steadily in the race we have started.'*

Gospel according to Luke 12: 49-53

Luke continues to write about the qualities required of the true disciple. Jesus' words recorded in the gospel today show us that faith and discipleship may strike at our most fundamental loyalties, challenging our discipleship, and maybe bringing division, even setting household against household, or within the family. While Jesus may be exaggerating to make the point about the integrity expected of the true disciple, *'Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No. I tell you, but rather division'*, the task of the disciple to give witness to the gospel is paramount. Compromising on the truth of the gospel is not an option for the true disciple who is required to put fidelity and the witness to truth, before all things. As the example of the prophets and martyrs who have gone before show, there may be a personal cost involved in being a witness.

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