

A Coffee with Alessio



22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

Lectionary:

First Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 62(63):2-6,8-9

Second Reading: Romans 12:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27

The Scripture Readings this Sunday remind us that being a follower of Christ is not going to be easy. Our lives will hopefully be better because of our positive response to Christ's invitation to follow Him, but they aren't always going to be "a walk in the park." Christ, does however, promise to accompany us every step of the way.

In the First Reading, Jeremiah is given a task by to God to be His messenger to the people of Israel, warning them that their city was going to be besieged and destroyed and they would be taken into exile. Jeremiah really didn't want to be the messenger, for the people turned on him as we hear in the First Reading this Sunday. However, God was not going to have any part of Jeremiah getting out of this task, and the Lord overpowered Him. As Jeremiah will tell us: "you (Lord) have overpowered me: you were the stronger."

In the Gospel Reading, Christ tells his disciples: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me." Yes, Christ led the way for taking up His Cross, and if we are going to be followers of His, He expects us to give the same commitment. Bearing crosses is not easy. It is hard to watch family members suffer, or to watch them die, or to have people give us a hard time or treat us poorly. It isn't easy when friends abandon us for "a better offer". Yet, when Christ died on the Cross on Good Friday, he took upon Himself all of the sins of humanity – past, present and future, and redeemed us all by the shedding of His blood on Calvary. What did he say to the good thief while dying on the Cross was: "today you will be with me in paradise." So, let us offer up to the Lord our trials and tribulations, but not

in a flippant way expecting some magic to happen. Rather, let us offer them up to the Lord who died for us, but as part of our prayer ask the Lord to help us carry our burden. In the midst of our burdens, let us be wary of those which others are carrying and always remember them in prayer and where possible offer them practical support. Sharing in the burdens of others is also a part of following Christ and carrying our cross.

In terms of hymn suggestions this week, three hymns come to mind: "The Summons", "O Jesus Crucified" and "Lift High the Cross". Each of these hymns in their own way illustrates that following Christ is going to change our lives forever. Saint Paul ties the thread of the Scriptures together so well in the Second Reading (to the Romans) this Sunday when he says:

"Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind."

Yes, we must let Christ guide us in all things and trust in His ways, even when we don't feel like it.

As for a coffee and cake this week, a sticky date pudding from Chef and Co in Beaufort Street would be a good idea. Yes, the sticky caramel reminds us that sticking to the Lord isn't always easy but it is that caramel sauce that makes the sticky date pudding the delectable delight that it is. Without it, the pudding would just be a plain old sponge. So it is with Christ. We must give thanks and praise Him in good times, and turn to Him in our time of need. Saint Monica (whose feast day we celebrated yesterday), knew only too well how to persevere with the Lord. Her son, Saint Augustine (whose feast we celebrate today), wasn't always a "saint". Saint Monica prayed and went after her son, and eventually caught up with him. She never gave up praying to the Lord, nor on her hope that her son would eventually turn back to Him. Her prayers were answered shortly before her death.

Till next week – enjoy your coffee and cake!

Mr Alessio Loiacono
Music Field Officer

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