

22nd Sunday of the Year A

*Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good.
(Rm 12:2)*



First Reading

Jeremiah 20:7-9

You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger. I am a daily laughing-stock, everybody's butt. Each time I speak the word, I have to howl and proclaim: "Violence and ruin!" The word of the Lord has meant for me insult, derision, all day long. I used to say, "I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name any more." Then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it.

Second Reading

Romans 12:1-2

Think of God's mercy, my brothers and sisters, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. "Heaven preserve you, Lord," he said. "This must not happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's."

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour."

Meditation

In the narrative of the profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi, the principal figure is Peter rather than Jesus. The next episode in the gospel confirms this impression. Just as we were impressed with Peter's walk on the water, here we are equally impressed by the juxtaposition of his faith with his lack of faith.

Peter has just acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. But he sees messiahship as the glory of a royal triumph. The master however, presents himself as the suffering servant of Isaiah who will redeem his people through his passion, death, and resurrection. The disciples understand what it means to be put to death, but they do not comprehend the meaning of "raised up". Therefore, the impulsive Peter, brought to this point by his unenlightened love, revolts against the apparent cruelty of the divine plan. Suddenly, he reverses his position. He to whom Jesus has just said: "Happy are you" after his profession of faith, is now chided sharply: "Get out of my sight, you Satan!" The "Rock" who was strong enough to have the Church built upon him is now the obstacle, the "rock of scandal" along the Messiah's route. Jesus had said: "It is my Father in heaven who has revealed this to you," and now he affirms: "You are not judging by God's standards."

"Get out of my sight" may be interpreted by each Christian as: "Go behind me to follow me. You are a disciple and every disciple must follow the master." The Christian can no more escape the cross of salvation than could the Christ. Truly God's standards are not ours.