

Twenty Second Sunday of the Year

'There seemed to be a fire burning in my heart' (Jeremiah 20:9), 'offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice' (Romans 12:1), and especially 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Matthew 16:24).

If any of us imagine faith in God to be a comfort blanket that protects us from the sharp edges of life then today's readings will make us sit up and think again.

It is of course easy, as Saint Paul warns the church in Rome, to let our minds and behaviours be shaped by the world around us. Perhaps like Saint Peter in the Gospel reading we would wish to preserve the Lord from suffering and death which is a natural human way to think but not God's way.

And yet maybe we too have felt that fire in our hearts that Jeremiah speaks of in the First Reading even though at times perhaps speaking about God and our faith has like for Jeremiah brought us derision and insult. Like the psalmist we have longed for God like dry land longing for water. We have clung on when all seems lost. Why?

In the Alleluia verse before the Gospel we ask the Father to enlighten the eyes of our mind so that we can see what hope his call holds for us. The 'eyes of the mind' do not only see the things that our bodily eyes see. It is with the eyes of the mind, the eyes of faith, that we can see and discover the will of God for our lives and change our lives accordingly. It is with the eyes of faith that we can take up our cross behind the Lord being able to see that this is the path, and the only path, that leads to the new life that Jesus promises.

Being a follower, a disciple of Jesus is not only about a promise for the future. As we take up our crosses, as we offer ourselves as a holy sacrifice, then as St Paul says in the Second Reading our minds and behaviour will change. This almost certainly will cause us to live in a different way to those who have not made this choice and like Jeremiah, like Saint Paul, and like Jesus himself we might experience opposition from those around us even as we experience a deep peace within ourselves.

So this week we ask for the grace to be able to take up our cross as disciples of Jesus. We pray that our lives and our behaviour may be modelled by our new mind conformed to the will of God. We pray that we too might know that fire within our hearts and that our souls may continually thirst for God, recognising that it is in him that we have life.

Link to the video clip: <https://youtu.be/rDsLZ6s0yU0>