

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Jeremiah = jayr-uh-Mī-uh

“Duped”: It’s a strong word! This helps set the tone for this reading, which is one of weariness and frustration.

Take care not to over-dramatize Jeremiah’s frustration. It will come through clearly in the words themselves as you proclaim them.

Extra emphasis on “cannot endure.”

LECTIONARY #124

READING I Jeremiah 20:7–9

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

You **duped** me, O LORD, and I let **myself** be **duped**;
you were **too strong** for me, and you **triumphed**.
All the day I am an **object** of **laughter**;
everyone **mocks** me.

Whenever I **speak**, I must **cry out**,
violence and **outrage** is my **message**;
the **word** of the LORD has **brought** me
derision and **reproach** all the **day**.

I **say** to **myself**, I will not **mention** him,
I will **speak** in his **name** no **more**.
But then it **becomes** like **fire** **burning** in my **heart**,
imprisoned in my **bones**;
I grow **weary** holding it **in**, I **cannot endure** it.

READING I The words that we read from Jeremiah today are some of the strongest words of lamentation found in the Old Testament. The prophet has just completed three forecasts of Jerusalem’s downfall (Jeremiah 19:1–3, 14–15, and 20:1–5). The most recent prediction of the city’s demise was made to the Temple priest Pashhur, who had placed him in the stocks outside of the Temple’s gate (Jeremiah 20:2). After announcing that Pashhur and all his family will die in captivity in Babylon, Jeremiah turns his attention to God and calls out in his agony.

Jeremiah claims that God had “duped” him by calling him into service as a prophet. The Hebrew word *pātā* may also be translated as “seduced,” thereby making the accusation more comparable to sexual allurements. The prophet’s point is to address God as boldly as possible, revealing the frustration he has internalized for a long period of time. Jeremiah complains that his work as a prophet has been met with utter rejection, as the people treat him with “derision and reproach.”

However, in the final verse Jeremiah seems to surrender to God once more.

While he would like to forget God, refusing to bring him to mind or utter his name, God’s call surges up in him again “like fire burning in my heart.” Although he knows he will make every attempt to contain this fire within, it must be released. The language of this passage of lament suggests that to attempt to restrain the Word of God that must be spoken is simply impossible.

READING II Chapter 12 of Romans contains an exhortation on humility and charity. He has just finished proclaiming a hymn honoring the wisdom

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 63:2, 3–4, 5–6, 8–9 (2b)

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God whom I seek;
for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts
like the earth, parched, lifeless and
without water.

Thus have I gazed toward you in
the sanctuary
to see your power and your glory,
for your kindness is a greater good than life;
my lips shall glorify you.

Thus will I bless you while I live;
lifting up my hands, I will call upon
your name.

As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul
be satisfied,
and with exultant lips my mouth shall
praise you.

You are my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I shout
for joy.

My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.

READING II Romans 12:1–2

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

**I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.**

**Do not conform yourselves to this age
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and pleasing and perfect.**

A short and potent reading whose urgency presents a challenge to your assembly.

As challenging a teaching when Paul made it as it remains today.

of God’s mercy (Romans 11:33–36), and now he wishes to impress upon the Romans the need to live and to behave in a manner appropriate to the Christian way. In keeping with the mercy freely given by God, Paul opens this part of the letter by suggesting that God’s grace makes it possible for one to offer the entirety of oneself (one’s “body”) “as a living sacrifice.” The use of sacrificial language underscores that Paul is demanding complete and total surrender of the self. This is conversion not only of the mind and heart but of the way in which the body is used as well.

To accomplish this conversion—always to be done in cooperation with God’s will—disciples are urged to resist conforming to the world. Since the transformation of a Christian into the life of Christ is an ongoing process, the mind must be constantly discerning what is “good and pleasing and perfect.” Before Paul outlines concretely the ways in which disciples must live in this world with humility and charity, he prevails upon the Christians in Rome to envision life as constant transformation. Even though the world in which human beings live is temporary (see

1 Corinthians 7:31), Paul wants believers to understand the hard work of Christian life as a sacrifice pleasing to God.

GOSPEL

This passage marks a shift in the structure of Matthew’s Gospel. Immediately prior to today’s reading Jesus asks his disciples about his identity and Peter offers his great profession of faith (Matthew 16:13–20, see last week’s Gospel reading). Matthew’s Gospel now turns to focus on the cross. While Peter is able to identify Jesus as the Christ, he is unwilling to accept Jesus’ hum-

The tone of this Gospel reading begins gloomily, even apocalyptically.

"Rebuke": This is a strong word. Peter is upset.

But Jesus is bothered, even more so than Peter is upset.

Familiar though Jesus' command may be, it is challenging, something even the most devout Christian might not be able to live up to.

Note the inversion: wishes-life-lose compared to loses-life-find.

Slight pause between "all" and "according."

GOSPEL Matthew 16:21-27

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus began to show his disciples

that he must **go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly** from the **elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,** and be **killed** and on the **third day be raised.**

Then **Peter** took **Jesus aside** and began to **rebuke** him,

"God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you."

He **turned** and said to **Peter,**

"Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me.

You are thinking **not as God does, but as human beings do."**

Then **Jesus said** to his **disciples,**

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

For whoever **wishes to save his life will lose it,**

but whoever **loses his life for my sake will find it.**

What **profit** would there **be** for one to **gain the whole world and forfeit his life?**

Or what can **one give in exchange** for his **life?**

For the **Son of Man** will come with his **angels** in his

Father's glory,

and then he will **repay all according to his conduct."**

ble acceptance of God's will, which would lead to his suffering and eventual death. Thus, the juxtaposition of these two passages demonstrates the difficulty of holding together the horror of the cross with the messianic nature of the person Jesus.

In his private rebuke of Peter (Peter had taken Jesus aside) for attempting to shield him from suffering, Jesus reminds Peter that he is failing to discern the will of God. Peter is viewing power and authority as humans naturally would. However, Jesus turns to his disciples as a whole and tells them the true nature of power and author-

ity, namely, what will come to be celebrated in the Church as the paschal mystery. Discipleship involves the willingness to die to self in order to find life again in service of others. Jesus outlines this as a threefold movement: denial of self, taking up the cross, and following after him. Far from seeking the reward of glory, the very purpose of following Jesus is the carrying of the cross. Profit and gain are overturned in Christian discipleship; Christians are to give themselves away in order to receive all that Christ will have in store for them when he returns in glory. The final verse of the

reading foreshadows Matthew's story of the Son of Man separating the sheep from the goats on the day of his return (25:31-46). S.W.