



Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

✦ AUGUST 15, 2022

"Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things." CCC 966

Note that we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption on Monday, Aug. 15. However, because it falls on a Monday this year, it is not a holy day of obligation in the US.

PASTOR'S WEEKLY MESSAGE FOR THE 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME C

Our readings today show us how some people have withstood opposition. In the First Reading, we meet Jeremiah, the Prophet. He has been chosen by God to speak His message. But, it is often a message that brings Jeremiah much trouble. This is what the King's advisers say about him: "Let Jeremiah be put to death; he is unquestionably disheartening the remaining soldiers in the city, and all the people too, by talking like this. The fellow does not have the welfare of the people at heart so much as its ruin." So, the prophet was thrown into a well in which there was no water, only mud. He was left there to die. But, somebody convinced the king that this was very wrong, and Jeremiah was saved.

In the Second Reading, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews gives us the example of "so many witnesses" who have been strong. They have stood firmly, faithful to Jesus. He also tells us of Jesus, Himself, who "endured the cross." He says: "Think of the way He stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage."

The Gospel shows us situations when we, too, will need to stand firm in the face of opposition. This opposition will come, at times, from people of our own family. Jesus warns us: "Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on a household of five will be divided; three against two, and two against three." We need to correctly understand Jesus' words. At first, we might be surprised to hear Him say that He did not come to bring peace, but rather division. How can Jesus bring division? Is Jesus not asking people to live in peace? Here, Jesus means that division will take place because of His message. As it happened in the time of Jeremiah, people were divided among themselves because of God's message. In the same way, Jesus' words will sometimes cause a split within a family: three will follow Jesus and become Christian, two others will refuse to accept Jesus' message. At times, this will bring anger, bitterness, and even division between the members of that family. It is not that Jesus wants division to take place, but it happens as a result of people closing their hearts to Him, while others welcome Him in their lives.

I would like to share this story about what happened to someone I know. Ibrahim is a policeman. In his area, nearly all the people are Moslems. They are very strong in their belief in Allah, and his prophet Mohammed. Ibrahim, himself, was a good Moslem. One night he had a dream. He told me that, somehow, he knew it was Jesus speaking to him. Jesus said that He, Himself, was God's special Messenger, and that Ibrahim should be His follower by becoming a Christian. This was a big thing for Ibrahim. Imagine a faithful Moslem, living among Moslem people, wanting to convert. He tried to dismiss the idea, but at night he could not sleep. He only heard the same words, again and again, until he decided he would be instructed in the Christian faith. He went secretly to the Catechist and learned about Jesus and His message and was baptized. Some of his brothers and friends noticed he was no longer praying the Moslem prayers. They asked him what was the matter and he told them openly that he was now a Christian. They were very angry with him, and the father told him he does not belong to the family anymore. The girl who had been promised in marriage to Ibrahim would not become his wife. The District Police Commissioner, also a faithful Moslem, made false accusations against Ibrahim who was dismissed from his job. But nothing made him change his mind. He was a follower of Jesus and would remain so. Ibrahim was very courageous. We see what it cost him to become a Christian.

We, too, may have met much opposition in our family when we decided to become a Christian. But God has given us special strength and we are now followers of Christ. We should not be surprised at having to face difficulties because of our Christian faith. This is how it has always been. This is what the "many witnesses" we heard about in the Second Reading had to face. In the beginning of the Church, the Jews were against the Christians. Many of the Roman rulers were against the Christians. Later on, the Moslems were against Christians. This should not make us lose heart. On the contrary, it should make us stronger in our faith. It should make our decisions to follow Christ more solid. We should remain firm and steady in the face of whatever opposition we meet. Are you ready and willing to stand up strong in your faith?