

Commentary on the Readings for September 3, 2023

The 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

The theme of the Readings for today is a continuation of the readings for last Sunday where we are asked: *"Who do YOU say that I am?"* Assuming we answer as St. Peter did, *"Lord, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,"* we are then asked to give ourselves as a ***"Living Sacrifice"*** to God through Jesus Christ. Now you might think, "Whoa, that's asking a lot," and you would be right; but that is what God is asking of each of us. However, before you skip the rest of this article and go on to something else, please reconsider the idea. The word "sacrifice" means offering or giving, not always in the same context of a bloody offering like Abraham was asked of his son, Isaac, but more as a child would come with excitement and throw himself or herself into the lap of a father or mother. God is asking us to give Him the privilege of the same relationship as we might give a loving mother or father. St. Peter tells us essentially the same thing in his Letter. (See **1 Peter 2:4-5**) See how the Readings support this concept.

In the **First Reading**, from the Prophet **Jeremiah (20:7-9)**, we hear Jeremiah's lament of the results of his prophesying. Jeremiah didn't want to be a prophet, a spokesperson for God; but God chose him nevertheless. So the prophet later looks back on his calling as being "duped" or tricked into it. Further, he says that even after making up his mind not to prophesy a word, he was compelled to do so and could not keep it within. However, as we know, Jeremiah became one of God's greatest Prophets because he gave his very body, soul and spirit---his life.

The **Responsorial Psalm (63:2-9)** is the prayer of a person who has given himself entirely to God and, although he has known difficult times in doing so, he sees the goodness of God sustaining him through it all.

In the **Second Reading**, from **St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (12:1-2)**, we hear Paul giving us the essence of today's theme, the giving of our body, soul and mind or spirit to God, again, not in a bloody sacrifice, but in doing the will of God regardless of how our will might object. For those who can and will do this, the rewards are far greater than any mind can imagine.

The **Gospel Reading** is from **Matthew (16:21-27)**. Again, this story follows that of last week where Peter so eloquently acknowledges Jesus as Lord and God. Immediately after that, Peter begins to rebuke Jesus for talking about having to suffer and die, but this is exactly what Jesus' mission on this earth was. Jesus was sent by the Father to be the perfect offering that mankind could not give or be. To prevent or dissuade Jesus from fulfilling this mission was the work of Satan. Even Jesus, as a human being, had a difficult time in accepting this mission, but in the end He gave the ultimate fiat, ***"Not my will but thy will be done."***

As we go through life, there are many opportunities to make sacrifices or refuse them. Before we make a quick decision one way or another, we should stop and ask ourselves, ***"What would God want me to do in this case?"*** Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

MFB