



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**20th Sunday in Ordinary Time.
August 17th 2025**

Theme: "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."

Gathering Prayer

All: O God, who have prepared for those who love you good things which no eye can see, fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love, so that, loving you in all things and above all things, we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 12:49-53

⁴⁹ 'I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!

⁵⁰ There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress till it is over!

Jesus the cause of dissension

⁵¹ 'Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ⁵² For from now on a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; ⁵³ the father divided against the son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

Gospel Focus

Paradoxically, the peace that Jesus brings comes served with division. It's as though the poison is within the antidote. Living as a disciple of Jesus means that we will lose company with some, perhaps even family and friends. Disciples are no mere "go along to get along" kind of people. Faith in Christ, service of the poor, and working for justice are essential elements of discipleship. Others may have a vested interest in the status quo, and do not want things overturned or upended. But for a serious follower of Christ, for a disciple who follows in the footsteps of Jesus, opposition can be expected. Jesus himself lost his life in a confrontation with evil. Many of his followers down to the present day have lost their lives as well, or faced imprisonment, persecution, and hostility. "Good news" preached to the poor, the outcast, and the downtrodden, can sound eerily like sedition or revolution. When we stand on the side of the persecuted and marginalized we should not be surprised to face persecution and marginalization ourselves.

Gospel Reflection

Christians are so familiar with “peace on earth” as a tagline of Christianity that today’s gospel can be something of a shock to the system. The angels sang, “[P]eace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14; NABRE), and the cry of the crowds upon Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem will be “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. / Peace in heaven and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:38; NABRE). So it sounds strange today to hear Jesus saying that he is *not* bringing peace but division.

But then, upon a closer reading of the Gospel of Luke we do hear inklings of this theme. As an infant, Jesus is said by Simeon to be “destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34; NABRE). Simeon continues by saying that Mary will be pierced with a sword (Luke 2:35). Moreover, early Christianity was perceived by the Romans and others as we would consider a cult today. No self-respecting Roman wanted their children to be caught up in this Judean “superstition” as they called it. And those who became Christian often pulled away from their families, forming new bonds with other Christians, whom they considered a new family. So given that background, the idea that Jesus brought division might be seen in a different light. The peace that the Christians experienced was with one another, not the peace the world gives. And that peace might have come at the price of family divisions who did not understand this new way of life.

Of course, Christianity has been so domesticated today, with the culture empowering it and supporting it, that we have little experiential sense of what the early Christians encountered simply to be Christian. Any perceived impingement of religious freedom in the Western world today can scarcely be compared to what the first generations of Christians experienced, or Christians in the Middle East or Africa today, when some were and are being executed for their faith.

Though we share many common elements of our faith with those who have gone before us, the divisions they experienced in the early years seem distant. Still, when we take seriously the gospel message and live it boldly, we may be shunned or avoided by those we considered friends or family.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading – Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

⁴ Then the princes said to the king, “Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm.” ⁵ King Zedekiah said, “Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can do nothing against you.” ⁶ So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king’s son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern, but only mire, and Jeremiah sank in the mire....

⁸ Ebed-melech went from the king’s house and said to the king, ⁹ “My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they did to Jeremiah the prophet by casting him into the cistern; and he will die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city.” ¹⁰ Then the king commanded Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, “Take three men with you from here, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.”

Responsorial Reading - Ps 40:2, 3, 4, 18

R: Lord, come to my aid! (R)

I have waited, waited for the Lord, and he stooped toward me. **(R)**

The Lord heard my cry. He drew me out of the pit of destruction, out of the mud of the swamp; he set my feet upon a crag; he made firm my steps. **(R)**

And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God. Many shall look on in awe and trust in the Lord. **(R)**

Though I am afflicted and poor, yet the Lord thinks of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, hold not back! **(R)**

Second Reading – Hebrews 12:1-4

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

536. The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". (Jn 1:29; cf. Is 53:12) Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death. (Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50) Already he is coming to "fulfil all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. (Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39) The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. (Cf. Lk 3:22; Is 42:1) The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him". (Jn 1:32-33; cf. Is 11:2) Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened" (Mt 3:16) - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

607. The desire to embrace his Father's plan of redeeming love inspired Jesus' whole life. (Cf. Lk 12:50; 22:15; Mt 16:21-23) for his redemptive passion was the very reason for his Incarnation. And so he asked, "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour." (Jn 12:27) And again, "Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?" (Jn 18:11) From the cross, just before "It is finished", he said, "I thirst." (Jn 19:30; 19:28)

696. Fire. While water signifies birth and the fruitfulness of life given in the Holy Spirit, fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions. The prayer of the prophet Elijah, who "arose like fire" and whose "word burned like a torch," brought down fire from heaven on the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. (Sir 48:1; cf. 1 Kings 18:38-39.) This event was a "figure" of the fire of the Holy Spirit, who transforms what he touches. John the Baptist, who goes "before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elijah," proclaims Christ as the one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Lk 1:17; 3:16) Jesus will say of the Spirit: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:49.) In the form of tongues "as of fire," the Holy Spirit rests on the disciples on the morning of Pentecost and fills them with himself (Acts 2:3-4.) The spiritual tradition has retained this symbolism of fire as one of the

most expressive images of the Holy Spirit's actions. "Do not quench the Spirit." (1 Thess 5:1.)

1225. In his Passover Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a "Baptism" with which he had to be baptized.(Mk 10:38; cf. Lk 12:50) The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life.(Cf. Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:6-8) From then on, it is possible "to be born of water and the Spirit"(Cf. Jn 3:5) in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

See where you are baptized, see where Baptism comes from, if not from the cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: he died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved.(St. Ambrose, De sacr. 2, 2, 6: PL 16, 444; cf. Jn 3:5)

2804. The first series of petitions carries us toward him, for his own sake: *thy* name, *thy* kingdom, *thy* will! It is characteristic of love to think first of the one whom we love. In none of the three petitions do we mention ourselves; the burning desire, even anguish, of the beloved Son for his Father's glory seizes us(Cf. Lk 22:14; 12:50) "hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. . . ." These three supplications were already answered in the saving sacrifice of Christ, but they are henceforth directed in hope toward their final fulfillment, for God is not yet all in all.(Cf. 1 Cor 15:28)

Sharing and Discussion

1. Like Jeremiah in the 1st reading, when in life have you taken an unpopular position because you felt it was the right thing to do? Where did you find the fortitude and perseverance to remain firm in your conviction?

2. Similar to the words of Jesus in the gospel, St. Catherine of Siena is quoted as saying, "Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." How is God calling you right now to be more faithful and be who you are meant to be?

Closing Prayer

All: God of creation, you call us to yourself and invite us to be prophets of peace and justice. Hear our prayers that we might serve you in righteousness and truth. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.