

2020 22ND SUNDAY

Perhaps one of the most difficult things we have to do in life is to rid ourselves of the illusion that we must be in control of our lives. To give God control of our lives - to surrender our wills, our hopes, our very selves to God's Will - is something mankind has kicked against right since the days of Adam and Eve. The Original sin is not wanting to acknowledge that we are not the centre of the Universe. Rather God is.

To be on the high seas of life and to allow God's Hands to be on the rudder can be mighty challenging. We want to be steering the ship.

This, of course, is at the heart of the Church's opposition to euthanasia. We, as Catholics, believe that God must be allowed to hold the rudder; it is for God to determine the moment of our dying, not ourselves. This argument gains little traction in a nation where so many do not believe in God.

When we first jump out of bed in the Morning most of us, I hope, make a Morning Offering. Perhaps something like: "Lord- I am Yours to use today as You wish. Help me to bring Your love, Your wisdom, Your peace of heart to all the people I meet."

Our first Reading took place at a time of crisis for the Kingdom of Judah. An all-conquering, ferocious army from Babylon were approaching. Jeremiah felt compelled by God to confront the High Priest in Jerusalem, Pashhur, and all the leaders of Judaism to accuse them of not listening to the Voice of God. They were making self-centred, selfish decisions which would bring the nation to ruin. Jeremiah took an earthenware pot and smashed it in front of them crying out: "Yahweh says this: 'I am going to break this people and their city just as one breaks a faulty potter's pot because they have stiffened their necks, refusing to hear my words.'"

The High Priest strode up to Jeremiah and punched him in the face and then ordered him to be locked in stocks at the city gates.

Bruised and bleeding Jeremiah uttered the words we have just read. He accused God of seducing him. Being a prophet and speaking on behalf of God had only brought insults and derision. Momentarily he was tempted to ignore what God was saying to him and to be silent. But then he said: "No, I can't do that. There is a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort of holding in God's word is impossible. I could not bear it."

Jeremiah knew that he was compelled to do God's Will.

Sometimes we fight against what we know to be God's Will. We close our eyes to God's Light and give in to selfishness. We become like Peter in the Gospel Reading. And the danger is that we can then quickly become a person Satan can manipulate to use for evil purposes.

As we heard last week, it was revealed to Peter by the Father that Jesus was the Messiah. Shortly after, Jesus let Peter know that it was the Father's Will for all of them to journey to Jerusalem so that Jesus, as the Messiah, could proclaim God's inbreaking Kingdom in the Temple of Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism. Peter knew the dangers that this would bring and argued against it vigorously, "Lord it is better to stay in Galilee." Jesus confronted Peter and pointed out that by closing himself to God's voice he was becoming an instrument for Satan to use to thwart Jesus' messianic mission.

Jesus' words apply to all of us. If we ignore what we know to be God's Will and blindly do our own thing then we, too, can easily become instruments of Satan, working against the coming of God's Kingdom on Earth.

On Friday we celebrated the Feast day of St. Augustine. Augustine lived in the early 400's. He was a brilliant scholar but in his early days was utterly self-absorbed. He was lustful, dishonest and totally closed to the beautiful example of Christianity lived by his saintly mother, St. Monica. But in his late 30's he had a conversion. Finally he faced the truth that he was on a path of darkness and needed to allow God to govern his life. In his autobiography called "My Confessions" St. Augustine wrote:

*O Beauty of ancient days
Too late have I loved You.
Behold, You were within and I searched for You abroad.
I was deformed, plunging amid fair forms which You had made.
Things held me far from You.
Then You called and shouted and burst my deafness.
You flashed and shone and scattered my blindness.
I tasted You and now I hunger and thirst for You.
You touched me and now I burn for Your peace.*

Like St Augustine, Jeremiah and later St. Peter, we must strive to totally conform ourselves to God's Will. We must face up to all that is selfish within ourselves and give the total gift of our will to our all-Loving God. Our constant prayer must be: "Thy Will be done, O Lord- as it is in heaven."