

## SPIRITUAL LIFE

### 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Chris

This is my first Sunday with you. This is a time when our thoughts naturally turn to unity and oneness. Then we hear the Gospel we had today about division and disunity. What should we make of this? We are forced to ask why Jesus would have spoken of this kind of violence and separation. In most other areas of the Gospel Jesus speaks of peace. Even from Jesus' birth the angels heralded his coming by declaring "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to mankind."

Scripture scholars believe that these words of Jesus were a reminder to the apostles that when they lived out their faith publicly they could expect that everyone would not accept them. Perhaps their family members would even reject them. This division could lead to martyrdom. It was certainly so in Jesus' own family. John the Baptist proclaimed a baptism of repentance and conversion to the crowds that came to the river. He spoke boldly to King Herod. This landed him in jail and to his beheading. Jesus could see that his own concern for the poor and the outcast and his challenge to the Scribes and Pharisees was leading to a real division between him and them. He figured it was only time before he would suffer martyrdom too. So, Jesus tells the Twelve that they too will find the same division in their lives.

You and I don't expect to be martyred for the faith. We are fortunate to live in a country where religious toleration is the norm. Many other nations follow this same policy. But we know that it is not universal. There are countries where religious toleration and acceptance is not guaranteed. In many Middle Eastern nations the only acceptable religion is Islam. Christians and Jews are not allowed to worship publicly. Even in Catholic countries violence occurs due to religion. Certainly that has been the case in Northern Ireland for years.

So, it is possible that one can experience persecution for the faith in some areas around the globe. But I would contend that if we were really faithful to the Gospel today in our country and in our culture we

too would find it difficult. God calls every person to live faithfully, honestly, and with care and concern for the poor and lowly.

I have heard of people being fired or reprimanded at their jobs for not fudging figures to make the boss look good. Being honest meant that they were ostracized. Sometimes those who will discover that their company is polluting or doing something unjust will find that they are threatened. Another person I know discovered that their boss was having an affair that she had to lie about, even to his wife. She couldn't take it anymore and went to administration. She asked to be transferred to another department. Instead they fired her.

This kind of problem can occur in families too. I know of a couple who were not very religious. They didn't attend Mass regularly nor did they have any outward signs of their faith in their home., the wife went on a retreat and discovered that God has so much more for her in mind. She came home on fire with the desire to serve him more. She started attending church regularly. She put up religious pictures around their home. She also didn't want to watch TV or movies that had sex and violence in them. Her husband couldn't understand this change. He resented it and began to resent his wife. Eventually they separated because their religious differences were so profound.

In all of these cases religion and faith were at the core of the disagreements. Jesus knew that this could and would happen. He wanted his disciples to realize that when it happened they were not alone. They would find that there were many saints and angels who were with them guiding them through it. This cloud of witnesses helps us this day and every day to live faithful lives. So, do not fear when you experience trial and distress for living the faith. Do not think that you are abandoned or alone. You are not. God never abandons His own. That gives us courage to live faithful lives pleasing to the Lord come what may.

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 38:4-10

Hebrews 12:1-4

Luke 12:49-53

August 18, 2013

# 靈 修 生 活

## 人 生 是 作 戰

曹 立 珊 神 父

「天國以努力奪取，而強者得之！」(瑪十一 12)

「人生就是作戰」(約七 1)

聖保祿宗徒也說：「我這樣打拳，不是如同打把空氣的；我痛擊我身，使它為奴，免得我給別人報捷，自己反而落選。」(格前九 26-27)

梵二大公會議依照聖經的啟示，也曉諭我們：信友迫切需要，並有義務和罪惡艱苦作戰，以至雖死不辭。

本主日三篇讀經從不同的角度，指示我們：人生注定了要和惡勢力搏鬥，只有超越(勝過)罪惡的人，才能得到真正的和平與幸福。反之，向惡勢力投降(屈服)，不是和平，是永死。

### 雖 死 猶 榮

舊約時代的先知是天主的代言人，他的任務是傳達天主的意旨。一般來說，天主的意旨不符合世俗的想法與作法(若十五 18-20)。為此，「忠言逆耳」就成了千古不磨的格言。

耶肋米亞先知深知先知的職務不好做，曾一度拒絕接受這職務(耶一 6)。但他依靠天主的助佑，毅然答覆天主的召喚，把逆耳的「天主之言」傳達給當時的昏君賊官。雖因此被投入枯井，最後竟遭殺身之禍，他也在所不辭。(現代 22)

耶肋米亞四十年與惡勢力搏鬥，表面上似乎毫無成就。其實，他的成就在身後，他以淚、汗和血所澆灌的「天主之言」的種子，日後發芽、開花、也結了碩果：他的言論，不只在流亡巴比倫的選民中，成了「精神酵母」，也準備了選民領受充滿恩寵的新約，更影響了萬世萬代的「善心的人」。

### 奮 鬥 到 底

希伯來書更從亞巴郎到瑪加伯時代，近兩千年來所有著名的聖祖先賢，如何與糾纏他們的罪惡搏鬥，又如何堅持信德，奮鬥到底，決不向惡勢力低頭，提網絜領地提出來，做為我們奮鬥的典型。

最後到新約中的耶穌基督，祂如何忍受十字架的痛苦，奮鬥到底，而今「坐在天父寶座的右邊」。

希伯來書說：基督所以忍受罪人的凌辱，目的就是為說明：人生就是作戰，就是與罪搏鬥。同時也鼓勵我們，面對惡勢力的挑戰，不可灰心喪志，卻要奮鬥到底。

要切記：世上的艱難困苦，正是我們努力奮鬥以獲得成功的大好機會，我們要好好把握，不要錯過！

### 大 義 滅 親

在福音裡，從文字方面看，似乎很矛盾：基督一方面說：「我把平安賜給你們」(若十四 27)，這裡又說：「我來不是送平安，而是送分裂」；一方面說：「應孝順父母，愛你的近人」(瑪十九 19)，「應彼此相愛」(若十五 12)，這裡又說：「父母與女兒……互相反對。」

從經文的真實意義(從整個啟示)來看，不只沒有矛盾，而且道破了人生的真諦：要與罪惡作戰。

耶穌在這裡所說的「和平」，是與世俗「妥協」，尋求情慾的暫時安定的意思。祂來正是為教導我們與罪惡的勢力作戰，奮鬥到底，總不與罪惡的勢力妥協(求和)。

其次，耶穌不是教導我們反對父母親本人，而是反對他們的世俗精神與作風。這正符合我國自古就倡導的「大義滅親」(左傳)的良善精神。

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 八 月 十 八 日

耶 38:4-10 ; 希 12:1-4 ; 路 12:49-53