

Homily. 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 13/14 August 2022.

Unless they're deranged nobody likes conflict. No one goes out seeking to find, let alone to create arguments and division, except those few people who've become so involved with themselves and their own agendas that they can't see past themselves. Jesus wasn't one of those sorts of people. He was someone who was wise enough to know that, even if secretly, we all want to get along. He was also smart enough to realise that if you're going to cheer for something new, a better way forwards for all of us including the poor and the powerless, then sadly, opposition and conflict is almost certain to follow.

This is what Jesus is speaking about in today's gospel. It's the fire that He wished were blazing already, the fire of the new way of living and relating to one another that He, and that we, call the Kingdom and Reign of God. The Baptism He longed for with great anguish and some anxiety was His upcoming face off with the powerful and privileged of His time. He knew that they would do all they could to keep things unchanged, profiting and suiting themselves very well regardless of the cost to others.

As the saying goes, you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs. Jesus was offering a completely new recipe for the way we live. This meant breaking some eggs, creating some division as we choose between the fresh food of God or our old dried up diet. It'd be great if this wasn't the way that things work in this world, but it's not. To preach, model and practice a new, different way, offering us a fresh perspective on ourselves, others and the meaning of life means disturbing the comfortable and the fact is that many of them aren't going to like it.

They didn't like it either when Jeremiah the Prophet spoke Gods word, tossing him into the mud of a dry well into which he began to sink. God rescued Jeremiah, bringing him back to,life from the brink of death and into the light from out of the smelly, muddy darkness. Jesus had faith that God would come to His aid, and to ours too, as we said in the Psalm.

The important thing for us to hang onto in this is that Jesus said everything He did out of love for us. He went to receive His Baptism on Good Friday out of this same self-giving love for us and for the world. It's only our love for others that can be allowed to drive our choices and our speaking, not anger, frustration, resentment or any selfish urge to power. If we keep this rule in mind then any eggs we might break will always be done in the service of the truth of God and for the nourishment and salvation of many, just as Jesus did and just as our Eucharist proves.