

Homily. 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 2/3 Sept 2023.

Spring has arrived with all of its promise and hope. Yet, the readings of our Church speak of struggles, suffering, death and tell us of Peter's rebuke in the strongest possible terms by Jesus. It's fair to ask what's going on here? Let's start with Jeremiah the Prophet, a man seduced by the light and promise of God's word. A servant of that Godly call to conversion who couldn't stop from speaking about it, despite the hardships and rejection that doing so entailed. His own people cared not a jot for the change of heart and ways that he spoke of on God's behalf, making certain that Jeremiah knew so. But, as his prayer tells us, to be silent was impossibly more painful for him than what he already endured. Jeremiah persisted because he loved God, was loved by God, and so he simply had to do the best, most truthful, loving thing by God's people.

In their minds and hearts they refused him a hearing, so the Babylonian army came destroying Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. Many were killed and of those who survived most were taken away to decades of exile in Babylon. Israel and Judah as a nation and people was ended. Jeremiah lived through all of this. He survived it and he kept on speaking of God to those remaining, this time telling them of God's healing and fidelity to all the ancient promises; the God of lasting love, hope and life.

Peter swung like a pendulum on a very short chain. He was happy to welcome the revelation of God, telling Jesus and the other disciples about it. We heard of this last weekend when he proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ, God's Anointed, the Son of the living God. Jesus responded saying that Peter had indeed received God's insight and word, naming him as 'rock' on which the faith of the Church would be built. Then, Jesus

spoke to the disciples about what being the Christ meant; suffering and struggle; and where it would take him; to death on the Cross and only after this to rise on the third day; whereupon Peter quickly swung the other way. It seems that he was fine with the Christ in glory and power part, but not at all happy with the struggles and costs to get there. Peter's love of God and fidelity to Jesus way had lots of growing up to do.

No season comes easily either, though where we live makes it harder to notice this than in other places. Our Autumn dying is gentler, our spring flowering more subtle, our Summers are full of families, beaches and parties, while our Winters are mild and wrapped up with warm meals. In a similar way many don't see us or want anymore to hear what we have to say about abortion, euthanasia, justice for our indigenous first peoples, homelessness, peace making and of acting with respect and care for creation and its finite resources. A comfort with the way things are and letting things be prevails in our society, covering us in its soft pall even if doing so spells out words of death, grief, anger and injustice for so many.

Still, God's word is not so easily silenced, anaesthetised, torn from life and tossed into the ground or the fire. That's been tried on the Word of God himself, yet he lives and reigns forever, in history and in each of us. Our love of God and for others compels us to speak out God's word as we try to live the values of Christ. Today this is our sharing in the Cross of Christ which is the fulcrum of our faith, the foundation for our new mind, as we come to know and to grow in what is good, what God wants and what is the perfect thing for us to do and to be .