

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

- In our first reading today...the Prophet Jeremiah...is sure letting the Lord have it!
 - You duped me O Lord...you tricked me into being a prophet.
 - You gave me words of violence and destruction...
 - I shared them with your people...
 - but now look at them...
 - they openly mock and make fun of me!
 - So I'm through!
 - I won't talk about You...
 - I won't even mention Your Name.
 - As a prophet...
 - Jeremiah had certain expectations...
 - for how things should go...
 - being that he was on God's side and all.
 - But things ended up being way too hard for him to handle!
 - And even his notion of God...
 - even that was challenged in the process.
- And we see something similar in our Gospel with St. Peter.
 - God's message to the world...
 - and the effects of that message on 'The' Prophet this time...
 - on Jesus...
 - well that was simply...way too much for Peter to handle...
 - and it challenged...his notion of God as well.
- But then something wonderful begins to happen to Jeremiah.
 - The very same words...that he refuses to share...
 - they become this intense...burning fire in his heart...
 - and he simply must share them...
 - even if that means...more suffering for him.
 - That fire...
 - that burning in his heart...
 - that's what changed everything!
- And that's what the Lord had me focus on in prayer.
 - Do you know what that fire is?
 - That's the love of the Lord!
 - God's love is a consuming fire.
 - Think of the image of the Sacred Heart...
 - or even the Burning Bush from the Old Testament...
 - God's love Itself...is something that's wonderfully ablaze!
 - But both Jeremiah and Peter...
 - they are blocks to that Love.
 - So they had to be purified...
 - before that love can be properly shared.

- For Jeremiah...
 - that meant that burning in his heart...
 - And for Peter...
 - it was actually Jesus'...
 - sharp and corrective words.
 - Both experiences were loving...
 - but both were also painful...
 - they burned!
 - And in that sense...
 - what they experienced...
 - was not unlike our notion of purgatory...
 - purifying them...
 - while drawing them closer to the Lord.
- God's love is a consuming fire.
 - It's a burning passion for us...
 - that's so hard for us to comprehend.
 - Because we so often get blocked by the notion...
 - that love means...warm fuzzy feelings.
 - And it can be.
 - It's wonderful like that at times!
 - But it also means suffering...like the Cross.
 - And Jesus...
 - He knows...
 - exactly which one we need to experience...
 - at every single step of our life.
 - That doesn't mean that God's love changes...
 - it's only our experience that changes...
 - both in this life...and the next.
 - The same burning love that enlightens and comforts the souls in heaven...
 - is the same burning love that purifies the souls in purgatory...
 - and it's the exact same burning love...
 - that torments the souls in hell...
 - because they reject that love for all eternity.
 - God's love never changes...we do...in relation to Him.
 - And the choices we make now...in this life...
 - that determines how we experience that love in the next.
 - Purgatory is just a merciful extension of this life...
 - giving us a bit more time...
 - to be purified and ready...
 - for the level of love that we will experience in heaven.

- Make no mistake...
 - Jesus burning desire...is for all of us to get to heaven...
 - and He alone knows how best to get us there.
 - Sometimes that means a consoling experience of His love...
 - Thank God for those profound moments...
 - of love...peace...and joy...
 - they spur us on...they strengthen us!
 - But other times...
 - it will mean the Cross...
 - because our hearts...
 - still need to be purified and stretched.

- That's another thing...God's love is infinite...but we're limited.
 - So in heaven...
 - we are all going to have that...proverbial bucket happiness...
 - that would be our hearts...
 - and they will all be full of happiness...
 - but some of our hearts will be bigger...
 - and some will be smaller...
 - based on how much we let the Lord...
 - stretch us...and open us up with His love in this life.
 - And as the opportunities to grow come...they hit us like waves...
 - a bit of consolation...then a bit of the cross...
 - a little bit of love, peace, and joy...
 - and then a bit of that burning purification...
 - back and forth it ebbs and flows...
 - as our hearts continue to expand.
 - But we still have to say yes...
 - to each and every opportunity...
 - or we simply won't grow.

- So how much of God's love...do you want to experience for all eternity?
 - Allow the purifying Love of the Lord...
 - to burn away any weakness, woundedness and sin.
 - Allow Him to stretch your heart...even now...
 - that you may experience a greater...
 - love, peace and joy...
 - for all eternity in Heaven.