

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Last week the Prophet Jeremiah was warning the people...
 - about the violence and destruction that were coming...
 - because Israel had wandered...
 - so far from the Lord and His ways.
 - And this week...we have a similar theme from Ezekiel.
- But unlike Jeremiah...
 - who was warning about a coming destruction...
 - Ezekiel was already taken...
 - with the first wave of exiles into Babylon.
 - So it's from there...that God begins to use him.
- The Book of Ezekiel is broken up into three parts:
 - The first part talks about...
 - how they've broken the covenant and need to repent.
 - The second part talks about...
 - how they didn't repent...
 - and that's why God's judgment...His punishment...
 - is upon them.
 - And as any of you parents know...
 - punishment is not simply a vengeful or mean act.
 - If it's done right...it's an important part of love.
 - It's meant to help put things right.
 - And the third part of Ezekiel...
 - well that's where our reading starts today...
 - and this part is all about how...
 - even though the situation is really bad...
 - there's still great hope...
 - if they follow God's plan.
 - So Ezekiel's mission...
 - to shore them up...
 - and get them following the Lord's truth once again.
- Anyone losing hope with the world right now...
 - with the things you're seeing on the news...and experiencing first hand?
 - Maybe we've even found ourselves asking...
 - *Lord...are you even there?*
 - It's hard not to be challenged in our faith...
 - when so many people are far from the Lord...
 - and so far from the happiness and peace...
 - that can come to a society...
 - when it's living according to His plan.
 - But more and more people are becoming hardened to God's Truth.
 - So what do we do?

- Our Gospel tells us...that we still need to speak the truth to them.
 - Obviously in a loving way...
 - bashing someone over the head with the truth...
 - will not convince or convert anyone!
 - So we do speak the truth...and one on one if we can.
 - If that doesn't work...we get someone's help.
 - If they refuse even that...we bring in the Church...
 - that also means...utilizing the power of prayer.
 - And if their hearts still remain hard?
 - Well that's when things get really serious...
 - Jesus tells us to treat them like Gentiles or Tax Collectors.
 - You might think that means we are to ignore them...or worse...
 - But how did Jesus treat them?
 - He loved them!
 - And two specific ways come to mind...
 - First...
 - He ate and drank and spent time with them.
 - Think of Zaccheus the tax collector.
 - Jesus stayed in his house...
 - so that Zaccheus could warm up to Him.
 - Would he have been ready to embrace the truth without that?
 - I doubt it...or Jesus wouldn't have done it.
 - But wasn't this also the method He used...with His own disciples.
 - They were pretty hard headed as well!
 - And yet...over the course of three years...
 - Jesus lovingly...patiently...spent time with them...
 - and their hearts really began to move!
 - But eventually...this method of reaching out...it simply stopped working.
 - Hearts became too hard for mere words to break through.
 - That's when people either...
 - abandoned Jesus...
 - or openly sought to Crucify Him.
 - And how did Jesus love them then?
 - He suffered...silently...for the love of them.
 - There is so much that is being communicated there (the Cross)
 - and most of it beyond words.
- My brothers and sisters...
 - in our own day and age...
 - we are fast approaching a time...
 - when the message of God's Truth...
 - spoken with words at least...
 - may no longer be that effective.
 - Hearts are just getting too hard...in our post-truth world.

- And we can certainly see the results.
 - Our world is overrun...by hatred and violence
 - Fear is becoming rampant...
 - And basic truths...
 - that have long been self evident...
 - are being thrown...right out the window.
 - Whether it's the sanctity of life in the womb...
 - or that marriage is between a man and a woman...
 - or even just the beautiful differences...
 - in the way that God made us...
 - male and female.
 - If we can't even agree on these basic truths...
 - then how can we ever lead people...
 - deeper in our faith?
- Soon...I believe...
 - the only message that will break through...
 - the chaos and confusion of the crowd...
 - is someone suffering...silently...
 - for the love of them.
 - I think that means us. It certainly means Holy Mother Church.
- Now don't get me wrong...
 - I'm not saying we should stop proclaiming the truth with words.
 - We must do what we can...by any means necessary...
 - and that certainly includes how we Vote...
 - How else will those...who can still hear...
 - ever hear God's truth...
 - if not from us...who've already heard it...experienced it...and been transformed by it?
 - But for those who simply cannot hear...
 - we may be called...
 - to enter more deeply into the mystery of His love (the Cross)...
 - and all for the sake of them.
 - What that exactly means for us...I don't honestly know.
 - I guess it depends on just how hard...peoples hearts really become.
 - But what I do know...is that it's nothing we should fear.
 - God's grace will be there for us...and in abundance...
 - as we try our best to love other souls like Him.
- And so...like Ezekiel...
 - who pointed out God's truth...
 - as the only sure hope for His people.
- All I can do...is point out the same for us (the Cross).
 - Where Christ goes...so goes the Church...and hopefully all of us...
 - if we have the courage to love like Him.