



20th SUNDAY of ORDINARY TIME ***YEAR C – August 18, 2019***

As you know, a prophet is one who speaks on behalf of God. A prophet doesn't always foretell the future, but a prophet always speaks the truth, even when people don't want to hear it. Such is the case with Jeremiah in the first reading today (Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10). It's easy to pass over the sad plight of this man because we don't know him personally, and it's hard to relate to the social practices of his time.

But suppose we bring him into present tenses and paraphrase the first paragraph of the first reading. Imagine that it reads this way: Just yesterday, the law makers of our land went to the president of the United States and said that Jeremiah must be put to death.

He is demoralizing many of the teachers in our public schools and he is destroying our children with all his God talk. He is not interested in the welfare of our people but only in their ruin.

We say to ourselves, that would never happen in our country. We would never put a man to death just to silence him. But then again, maybe there are other ways to silence those who talk about God.

Since the Pledge of Allegiance (under God) and The Lord's Prayer are not allowed in most public schools because the word "God" is mentioned in them, we can silence those who want to speak on behalf of God without putting them to death. We can pass a law. We can remove God from the public square for the sake of those who may be offended. We can tell the majority they must accept the will of the minority. The law can do that.

Recall the words of a kid in Arizona who wrote his own school prayer. He speaks only for his school. Here's what he writes:

- ✳ Now I sit me down in school, where praying is against the rule.
- ✳ For this great nation under God, finds mention of Him very odd.
- ✳ If Scripture now the class recites, it violates the Bill of Rights.
- ✳ And anytime my head I bow, becomes a Federal matter now.
- ✳ The law is specific, the law is precise. Prayers said out loud are a serious vice.
- ✳ 'Cause praying in a public hall, might offend someone with no faith at all.
- ✳ We're allowed to cuss and dress like freaks, and pierce our noses, tongues and cheeks.
- ✳ They've outlawed guns, and now the Bible. To quote the Good Book makes me liable.
- ✳ It's "inappropriate" to teach right from wrong, We're taught such "judgments" don't belong.
- ✳ We can get free condoms and birth controls, - Study witchcraft, vampires and totem poles.
- ✳ But the Ten Commandments are not allowed, no word of God must reach this crowd.
- ✳ It's scary here I must confess, when chaos reigns my school's a mess.
- ✳ So, Lord, this silent plea I make: Should I be shot; My soul please take!

If Jeremiah were alive today, our government would not put him in a cistern to silence him by starving him to death. We are a civilized nation and that's against our law. Our government would find a different way. Perhaps, they already have.

Reflect today on what you can do at home to compensate for what is missing in our public schools and public squares.