

Judging from the Jeremiah reading, rewards for a job well done don't always hold for a prophet who fulfills his/her job description. **Jeremiah, not one to hold back his feelings, speaks right up to God. "You duped me, O Lord."** (The word for "duped" can also be translated, "seduced.") And so Jeremiah finds himself up to his neck in trouble. What was particularly hard for Jeremiah to swallow was that he **wasn't undergoing trials because he shirked his responsibilities. He is suffering precisely because he has been faithful to his calling.**

He has had a **tough job to perform.** Judah, under Egyptian domination, had adopted pagan gods from Mesopotamia and Canaan. The prophet had **denounced this false worship and predicted the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.** He spoke **"violence and outrage"** to his own people. Thus, he angered the political and religious leaders of his day and was beaten and jailed. His faithfulness to the message entrusted him by God, was the reason he was treated so harshly by his contemporaries.

**It does not appear that the disciples understood what they were getting into either, when they first accepted Jesus' invitation to follow him.** Today's gospel passage reveals that he is getting clearer about his impending suffering. **Like Jeremiah, Jesus will suffer for doing exactly what God wanted done.** His rejection will come, not only at the hands of political opponents, but also by those religious leaders whose interpretation of God and God's ways differed radically from Jesus'.

Did the disciples realize what they were getting into when they said "Yes" to his invitation to follow him? They are learning that serving Jesus, responding to God's call, even though this is a good thing to do, does not guarantee smooth sailing. So the answer is NO!

**At first things went quite well for the disciples.** Jesus had been the favorite of the crowds. He had attracted people by his miracles and fed the hungry with both spiritual and physical food. With all that success, we can't blame the disciples for not being able to comprehend Jesus' words at this moment. Peter says, in effect, **"God forbid Lord, that you should have to undergo any suffering."** **Why should things turn bad now when everything has been going so well?"**

And don't we too tend to measure whether we are doing the right thing by how well things turn out? We reason, if I am doing what God wants, then God will "bless" me. Or, if God is on my side, things will turn out well. Jeremiah and Jesus – what great prophetic voices they were! What dedication they had to their vocation, even in the midst of enormous religious and political opposition! Despite this opposition, they stayed the course, were faithful, they did the Will of God, right up to their martyrdoms.

We know contemporary people who have also spoken boldly, faced overwhelming opposition and even died for what they believed. In our times there are powerful prophet messages being proclaimed: Archbishop Oscar Romero, Ita Ford and her martyred companions in El Salvador, Martin Luther King, Jr., St. Maximilian Kolbe and many others.

And we will respond, yes, these are great people but I am just "ordinary Christians." Well, if we are listening to today's readings, then we "ordinary Christians" are also called to be "ordinary prophets."

How will we respond? **Do we have a choice, can we reject the invitation to be "ordinary prophets?"** Of course we can. His call to the disciple and the prophet is an invitation not a command! But it is clear in Jesus' own words...**"Whoever wishes to come after me...Whoever wishes to save his/her life...must take up his cross and follow me"** While his call is an invitation, Jesus wants us to be fully aware of what we are taking on.

**Like Jeremiah and Jesus, we won't always feel the divine pat on the back for a job well done.** Like Jeremiah and Jesus, we may just have to keep going, trusting the call we once heard. It is not that God isn't the source of our call and our ongoing strength. It's that we might not always feel it. God never abandoned Jeremiah and Jesus, but they didn't always experience that presence, **"you dubbed me Lord"** and **"My God My God why have you forsaken me"**

**So, Jesus invites us into the same daily journey. To not only to embrace the cross but to embrace faithfulness that will ultimately lead to the cross**

-finding ourselves at odds with our family's fundamental choices and criteria or success

-refusal to practice unethical business behavior, even at the risk of our jobs

-choosing forgiveness against voices telling us to be "realistic" and not so naive

-doing an honest day's work, even when the boss is not looking and others are cutting corners and telling us "everyone else does it"

-treating others with respect, despite our own moods, prejudices, or social standing.

-welcoming the newcomers into our country and social grouping, and treat them as a brother and sister

-working to bridge the gap between the poor and the outcast.

To be a prophet, a faithful disciple, one who embraces faithfulness and ultimately the cross is the invitation.

Jesus called Peter not only the Rock of the Church, but an obstacle "a stumbling Rock". Let us not be confused about the challenge or the cost.

Let us take up the Cross and by doing so save our life through Him!