



## Christ in Our Neighborhood

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Prayer

Eternal God and Father, by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed: guide and strengthen us by Your Spirit, that we may give ourselves to Your service, and live this day in love to one another and to You; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

### Commentary

#### 1st Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9

The third mark, catholic, does not refer specifically to the Roman Catholic Church. In this case, catholic means universal, in the sense of totality and fullness. This fullness comes from the uniting of Christ's body with its head, and also from the shared mission of being sent out by Christ to all of humanity.

Jeremiah was called to an unpopular mission that had never been part of his own dreams for himself. But he quickly learned that fighting against God's plan for him was futile. God's plan was bigger and better than Jeremiah could see. He tried to hold in the word that God meant to be sent out to the people, but it nearly exploded forth on its own. We are all called to this same mission as part of the catholic Church.

At the end of every Mass, the priest or deacon offers a rite of dismissal, issuing a command, such as, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." When taken as intended, these words are not an ending, but a beginning. We receive our marching orders.

The word Mass comes directly from the Latin phrase "ite, Missa est", which now translates "go, Mass is ended," but originates from "go, she is sent." The entire liturgical and Eucharistic celebration is named after the dismissal. Strange? Not if we remember our call and the purpose of Mass. We gather to be fed and nourished by His Word and by His Body and Blood. Then, we are sent out to return to our mission (also rooted in the Latin missa) with renewed vigor.

### Question

Have you ever felt duped by God? How did you respond?

### Commentary

#### 2nd Reading: Romans 12:1-2

St. Paul advises us to avoid conforming to this age and the ways of the world, and to discern the will of God instead. Laws, social trends, political majorities, and moral standards are in constant flux. They change with the times and can sway quickly with the influence of the media or outspoken individuals or groups.

## Catholic Truth

The teachings of the Church, however, do not change with the times. They are not whims or fads. They are based solidly in the Truth. This Truth does not change. The way that we apply this Truth to interact with the contemporary world causes some flexing and growth, but not systemic change. The Church is catholic (full) because She is sent to all people, calls all people to unity in Her, and encompasses all times.

The Church is not like a one-size-fits-all garment that doesn't really quite fit anybody, but tolerably covers everybody. The Church is perfectly tailored for each and every person, in every way, and in every age. In our modern world of international corporations and industrial globalization, it is easy to mistakenly view the Church as one huge conglomerate presiding over many smaller disparate churches. But the Church is much more than the sum of Her parts. The Church does not dispose of the richness of variety in order to create unity through forcing all members into indistinguishable, identical entities. Her unity lies in having a single head, not in having identical parts. The richness and diversity of the different cultural influences, all unified in Christ and the Magisterium, creates a unique, living being that is unequalled in its appeal to diverse groups over thousands of years.

### Question

What current laws, social trends, political agendas, or moral standards have sparked doubt or tempted you to stray from the teachings of the Church?

This is the last installment of our four-week series on the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

## Commentary

### Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27

Jesus' prediction of His passion must have come as a shock to the apostles. They still envisioned a Messiah of worldly power who would overthrow their oppressors, not a suffering lamb who had to sacrifice Himself in death for their salvation. Satan recognized this confusion and tried to use it to his advantage. Satan had tried this same tactic in the desert when he tried to tempt Jesus away from His mission three times (Luke 4). Satan used Peter to try to tempt Jesus away from His most supreme act of love: His crucifixion. Satan works in men by tempting them to deviate from God's plan.

Satan was able to use Peter because Peter was fearful of the pain and shame of the cross. Jesus says that to be with Him, we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him. Human nature urges survival, not death to self. We cannot expect denying ourselves to be an easy path. To take up the cross means certain death, and as part of the catholic Church, our hope does not come from avoiding this death, but lies in the power of the resurrection.

The Church is the only place of true safety amid the sinfulness of the world. St. Augustine proposed that the Church is analogous to the ark in the time of Noah's flood. Only a select few have chosen to gather together and take refuge in this place of safety amid the mighty storms. The Church is the world reconciled and called back into unity and guided by the breath of the Spirit to navigate safely. The Church is the only means of true salvation.

Don't fear the cross; embrace it! The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is our lifeboat. Do you want to be saved? Get onboard!

## Question

How has Satan tried to tempt you away from your crosses?

## This Week's Task

Treat the rite of dismissal as a prayer and as a commandment. Take it to heart and follow the command to go on mission.

## Group Prayer

*The group prays the following prayer:*

Lord, God,  
We adore you,  
We praise you,  
We thank you.  
Through our Baptism,  
You call us each by name for a special purpose.  
Grant us the wisdom to be  
Your instruments of peace and love.  
Fill our hearts with the enthusiasm and desire  
to carry on the mission of Jesus in spreading  
the Good News wherever we go.  
Amen.

**Continue with Psalm 63**

## Psalm

**Response: My soul is thirsting for you,  
O Lord my God.**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all  
my heart,  
for you have heard the words of my mouth;  
in the presence of the angels I will sing  
your praise;  
I will worship at your holy temple.

**R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

I will give thanks to your name,  
because of your kindness and your truth:  
When I called, you answered me;  
you built up strength within me.

**R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,  
and the proud he knows from afar.  
Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;  
forsake not the work of your hands.

**R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

**Conclude with an Our Father**