

## **LETTING GO AND LETTING GOD: 12<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A**

Have you ever become involved in a project that you thought was worthwhile, and one that would benefit others? Then, having starting it, you realize that your involvement was getting out of control? The hours you put in, the interruptions to your usual routine, the energy and concentration required, have all been eating too much into your time. So much so that's there's simply no 'me-time' left. So you begin telling yourself and hearing from friends: 'Your project is starting to take over over your whole life!'

Or else, have your efforts to do good in your local community and make a positive difference, been stirring up opposition from some group or other, that is absolutely determined to keep things just the way they are? 'Don't rock the boat,' they keep warning you. 'Don't try to do anything different.' 'Don't start anything new.' 'Back off now!' But it's too late to back off, cost what it may, so convinced are you of the value of what you are doing.

If you can identify with any part of what I've been saying, then the prophet Jeremiah in the First Reading today is your patron saint, the first of many people moaning and groaning to God about the rotten time they've been having for all their efforts. Now in temperament Jeremiah was a gentle soul. When God first called him to be a spokesperson for God, he protested that he was too young for the job (1:4-10). But God told him not to be afraid and promised to be with him and deliver him from his fears and doubts. In his current situation, as described in the Reading, he's going to need that deliverance, because even his friends have ganged up on him, and been giving him a rough time.

Jeremiah has done what God asked him to do. He has accused his people of turning away from God by entering into shady and shaky political alliances with their enemies. For this Jeremiah has predicted doom and gloom. But so far there has been none. So his hearers have mocked and jeered at him, belted him up, and even put him in prison. On his release, he feels compelled to let God know how angry he is with God for all the rotten things he has endured. On the other hand, he has also felt compelled to keep warning people about their need to change their ways in order to avoid the catastrophe that's definitely looming.

Can you and I identify with Jeremiah? Do we ever feel like shaking our fists at God and shouting, 'How could you let me get into this mess?' But there is more to the story of Jeremiah than his moans and groans. In that part of his story we've been hearing today, Jeremiah changes his tune. He thanks God that in all his troubles he has experienced God right by his side, has experienced God as his hero and champion providing maximum support. So while the prophet is in solidarity with us in our moans and groans, disappointments and complaints, he is also urging us to keep trusting God. No matter what we have to do and what we have to endure in our lives, God will never abandon us, and will keep staying right beside us.

In our Gospel reading today Jesus is just as encouraging. Don't be afraid, he says. Don't be frightened even of those who might murder you. For they cannot kill your soul, they cannot break your spirit. When all is said and done, the only fate to fear is ending up in hell. (Jesus

interpreted hell as being like 'Gehenna', literally that big rubbish dump to the south-west of Jerusalem, where fires raged continually).

Jesus is telling his followers – ourselves included – that they will face opposition, just like he did. It will come from even saying that we are Christians, people for Jesus. It will come from being Jesus' kind of people. It will come from walking in his footsteps, telling his truths, sharing his wisdom, and living his values and teachings.

But Jesus assures us that God will never stop taking care of us. Jesus also assures us that God is going to reward us for all our efforts to stay faithful to Jesus, no matter what ridicule, mockery and nastiness other persons might dump on us. After all, if God cares even for two sparrows that can be bought for a coin in the market, how much more caring will God be of those persons who keep following Jesus his Son as closely as they possibly can?

God is so aware of us, so much in love with us, and so much on our side, in fact, that he has counted every hair on our heads. We can trust, then, that on the Day of Judgment Jesus will be acknowledging us and praising us before God. We can trust that he will be reminding God of just how loyal and true we have been to Jesus, and of just how hard we have tried to live as wise and faithful servants of Jesus, even if we have sometimes messed up.

We are to live in hope, then, are we not? We are to stop worrying, are we not? We are to let go and let God, are we not?

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