

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday (A)

31<sup>st</sup> August 2014

‘Get back behind Me, in line, and follow!’

Jer 20: *The word of the Lord has meant insult for me*

Ps 62: *for you my soul is thirsting ...*

Rom 12: *do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you.*

Mt 16:21–27: *the way you think is not God’s way, but man’s.*

The second reading today, and the Gospel, echo each other nicely. St Paul says, “*Do not model yourselves on the world around you, but let your behaviour change ...*” And in the Gospel Our Lord says to Peter, rather forcefully, “... *the way you think is not God’s way, but man’s.*”

The force with which Our Lord corrects Peter — “Get behind Me, Satan!” — shows just how determined He is to make it clear that it is all too easy to fall into traps of wrong-thinking, going one’s own way, in contradiction of the Gospel. Think of it ... It was only in the previous passage — last week’s Gospel — that Peter had made that outstanding profession of faith, stating openly his belief that Jesus was indeed the longed-for Messiah. And here, moments later, he is getting it wrong, so seriously wrong that Jesus has to round on him and denounce his opinion. And this is Peter! St Peter, Prince of the Apostles, the first ‘Pope.’ No wonder, then, we too can sometimes get it

quite wrong, if we go it alone in our thinking.

As Christians, we have to accept that we do not think as the world thinks. This is basic. We do not “model ourselves on the world around us,” but we model ourselves on Our Lord Jesus. He was constantly going against the grain, breaking the mould, disconcerting those that would prefer the *status quo*. Often you hear people saying things like, “The Church should come into the modern world,” or it “should update itself.” When what this mostly means is, “The Church should accept the behaviour of the world around it,” not criticize the world, not go against worldly opinions. And yet, it is easy to see that this is completely wrong. Adopting the easy solution, avoiding the sacrifice, taking the route of least resistance ... this is never what the Church was founded by Christ to do. This was never His own attitude. And the Church must always, always keep looking lovingly at Jesus, and modelling herself on Him alone. The Church will always be counter-culture; for her Lord is most defiantly counter-culture. God knows how easy it is for us to deceive ourselves, and to find ways of

convincing ourselves that going against the Gospel — going against Church teaching — is the right thing to do in this situation. But we should let the Lord's challenge to Peter wake us up: "Get behind Me, Satan ... the way you think is not God's way, but man's." Get behind Me!! Get back in line with Me, I suppose He means, listen to Me and follow, don't leave the path, don't stray, don't kid yourself that you somehow know better than Me, the Son of God.

We each need to keep checking ourselves in this regard: where is our thinking going? Where is our practice going? Are we fully committed to the path of Jesus Christ; being 'in line' with Him; 100% behind Him; prepared to follow Him wherever He goes; prepared to "take up our Cross and follow Him," as we heard Him say last week? Yes, the answer has to be 'Yes'! Or at least the answer has to be 'No, you're right, I'm not ... yet ... But I must change.' We have to be different. Have the courage to be different. If we are not thinking, behaving, practising distinctly differently — better than — the world around us ... then what on earth are we doing? How can we in any

way call ourselves Christians? Let's be determined to be different, that is, holy! Don't worry what the world thinks of you! Worry only what God thinks of you. Be holy, be happy, be blessed!

St Paul again: "*Do **not** model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.*"