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## THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year A)

30th August 2020

Dear Friends,

It is said that we talk about the weather more than any other country. In conversation we often use it as an ice-breaker. But, the weather this month hasn't been exactly wonderful. Last week it was torrential rain and gales from storms Francis and Ellen, and Jorge due in the week ahead. What has happened to the balmy days of August, with still enough light and warmth to sit in the garden in the evenings?!

Coincidentally, light and warmth seem to be 'missing' from this week's Scripture Readings.



Jeremiah was only a young man when he became one of God's Prophets. Jeremiah 20 : 7-9. The two short verses that are today's Reading are filled to overflowing with the dilemma in which Jeremiah finds himself. "You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced" So many people go through this experience at some point in their lives. They 'fall in love'; and it is as if their beloved has cast a spell over them. They no longer think about themselves, but only about what would please their beloved. It is almost as if they can't live without their new-found partner.

### [Readings for 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time](#)

But, when things go wrong, as they so often do, we join with Jeremiah in saying : "I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name any more." The tiff is resolved quickly and we realise that, although we said 'I will not think about him/her', we did nothing but think about them ... 'I will not speak his name any more', but every conversation we had begun with our beloved's name!! ... We are in a state of utter confusion; so ... do we protect ourselves from any further hurt or degradation by blaming the other for everything that went wrong? ...

True love can weather these storms and the couple can reunite. Jeremiah went through all these emotions when he declared :

"But ... there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart,  
imprisoned in my bones.



The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it.”

We come to the realisation that fighting against our beloved is not what we want. Our deepest desire is to be reunited with them. We know that the two, working together, can achieve so much more.

This is exactly how God works with us ... He allows us to ‘fall in love with Him, to be attracted to Him’ but ‘falling in love’ and ‘being attracted’ can be very superficial experiences. We need to dig deeper into our relationship and discover more about the God who says He loves us. If we do this, our lives become rooted in His.

So rooted that Jesus was able to say, ‘I am the vine, you are the branches’.

Throughout our lives, time and time again, we will ‘fall deeper in love’ with God and He will lead us to places where we never, in a million years, expected to go.

So, Jeremiah has revealed to us something of his love-relationship with God.

The beautiful words of Psalm 62 are prayed in response to that reading.

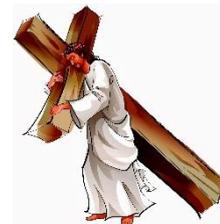
O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
my body pines for you  
like a dry weary land without water ...  
... My soul is thirsting for you,  
O Lord my God ...

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.  
For your love is better than life ...

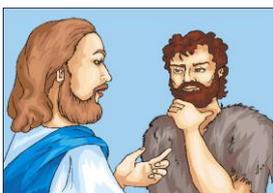


In St Matthew’s Gospel 16: 21 – 27, the ‘honeymoon’ is over for the disciples of Jesus. Throughout His ministry Jesus has been teaching His disciples, through word and action, what is expected of them. Now is the time when Jesus must make this more obvious, In case they have missed the full meaning of His teachings.

Jesus begins to make it clear to his disciples that he is destined to go to Jerusalem and to suffer grievously, at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death ... and to be raised up on the third day.



Still they did not understand the meaning of His words; so Peter takes Jesus to one side, to have a word in private : “Heaven preserve you, Lord; this must not happen to you.”



But Jesus turns and says to Peter,  
“Get behind me Satan! You are an obstacle in my path,  
because the way you think is not God’s way, but man’s.’  
The other disciples would have been watching at a distance  
and even trying to hear what Peter was saying to Jesus.

When Jesus says, “Get behind me Satan!” they must have heard the sternness of His voice. Jesus turns His attention to them, they must have been worried : What is He going to say? Will they be reprimanded like Peter?

No, gently Jesus says to them:

“If anyone wants to be a follower of mine,  
let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

In these words, Jesus predicts that they too will encounter suffering in their lives.  
He tells them to accept this suffering gladly, because through it, they will redeem others.

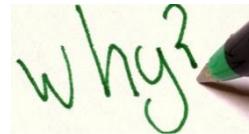
“Anyone who wants to save or cling onto his life will lose it;  
but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.  
What, then, will a man gain  
if he wins the whole world and ruins his life?  
Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?  
For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father  
with his angels,  
and when he does, he will reward each one  
according to his behaviour”.

What does Jesus mean? ... He is turning the world's values upside-down ...

To this day, in the face of suffering people still ask, “Why?”

It is said that ‘a trouble shared is a trouble halved’ ...

**But, why does suffering exist if God loves us? ...**



Suffering exists because we were given total freedom to do what we wanted with our lives.

God is not a ‘policeman in the sky’, He is not like a puppeteer who pulls strings  
to make people act in a particular way. No, He formed us in love,

He made us in the image of His Son, to live like His Son, but He allows us to choose ...

Some suffering comes as a result of making the wrong choices ...

Some suffering comes as a consequence of feeling inadequate in ourselves  
so we break down and gossip about others so that they too experience  
something of what we are going through ...

Some suffering presents itself in the form of a lifelong illness or handicap,  
or through a tragic accident ... suffering comes from within our genetic make-up,  
when we are diagnosed with cancer or any grievous sickness. Some of these can be cured  
or remission can be achieved, and that is wonderful.

For others, this sickness will lead them to death ...

It is how we ‘pick up’ and deal with our own suffering that makes the difference.

We can sit down under an umbrella of suffering, or we can accept the diagnosis,  
be filled with hope and keep on living even as we are being treated.

The sign of a person who has accepted their lot in life is the person who, from their sickbed will be  
the first to say :

‘How are you?’ and really mean it and be interested in your response.

Another sign of a faithful disciple is that they don’t indulge themselves  
in a litany of woes each time a visitor arrives.

Some suffer from mental health issues which can remain ‘hidden’ and in control,  
but the suffering is very real ...

All people suffer in one way or another.

The proof that you really are a ‘good friend, a best friend’  
is when someone opens up about their suffering to you ...

Will you open your heart to them and give their suffering a place in your life,

or will you turn away as quickly as possible?  
Are you the sort of person in whom others would confide?

**Where does 'suffering' feature in our prayer-life? ...**

Yes, we can each look to the Cross of Christ and that is good ...  
We can imagine Jesus carrying His Cross and falling ...  
But, can we see our own suffering as a way of redeeming others? ...  
That is more difficult.



**How do we redeem others through our suffering?**

If we pick up our own Cross to carry through life, if we are carrying it correctly, others will entrust their suffering to us, we load it onto our own Cross, relieving them of bearing the total weight on their own. If we pick up our own Cross to carry through life, if we are carrying it correctly, we will notice the refugee camps ... the knifings and guns used on our streets to kill and to maim ... we will notice the poor in our midst ... and, if we have faith, we have to believe that in His own most special way, God will lift the burden from some of these people;



**we will be carrying the Cross of Christ in the world of today.**

This takes a lot of thinking about, a lot of praying about, and a lot of trying to carry the Cross through life knowing that we will fall, but Jesus will be there to help us up, dust us down, and help us to start again.

All we need to do is : GIVE IT A GO ...



The cost of being a disciple of Jesus is to always be alert to the needs of others ... to be always ready to step forward and lend a helping hand ... an open heart ... a listening ear ... whatever the situation or the person requires.

As Christians, we can't ever just 'sit back' can we?! May God bless your spiritual efforts

*Fr. Michael*

*St. Ignace*

**A WORD**

By now you have probably heard, or read, on our website that public Masses are resuming here in St Ignatius Church ... This can only mean one thing : **that Fr Michael is well enough to celebrate them!** He is; but he will begin cautiously, so that he does not have to cancel a Mass

and disappoint people.

You will probably have heard, or read, that Fr Michael has been unwell. He was seen by Doctors in the last week of June and had an exploratory procedure booked for the first week of August. Every check has to be made, even though this would appear to be a minor gastric problem.

On return from France, Fr Michael was too ill to do anything and no Procedure could take place. He tried the 'I can cure myself' route for eight or nine days; it didn't work. So, for the first time in his life, he was taken by ambulance to Hospital, where he remained for a week. He speaks very highly of the Hospital Staff and of the treatment he received.

By the time he came home he had lost 4kg, and was very weak and unsure of his body. Gradually, gradually, he is trying to restore his energy and his stamina. Throughout lockdown and the summer months Father Michael has had but one desire : **to be able to celebrate Masses for the community again.** He is absolutely delighted to celebrate his first public Mass since the 20 March on Sunday 30 August.

*Fr Michael, we keep you in our prayers ...*