

The Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year
A – 2/3 September 2017 –
Labor Day Weekend/
5:00 PM Baptism of Agatha Margaret Pyles–
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community – HOMILY

1st Reading:

Jeremiah 20:7-9

- “You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped; you were too strong for me, and you triumphed. All the day I am an object of laughter; everyone mocks me. . . . the word of the Lord has brought me derision and reproach all the day. . . . I say . . . I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then it comes like fire burning in my heart . . . I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.”

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 63 – *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Romans 12:1-2

- “I urge you . . . Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”

GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 16:21-27

- “Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly . . . and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall happen to you.” He turned and said . . . “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” Then Jesus said . . . “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. . . . Or what can one give in exchange for his life?”

i. I know you have heard me share this before . . . but one of my very, **VERY** favorite movies of all time is “Steel Magnolias” . . . **GREAT** actors and actresses . . . perfect for the characters they play . . . some of my favorites being M’Lynn, Shelby, Truvy and Annelle . . . but absolutely **loved** Ouiser and Clairee . . . played by Shirley MacClaine and Olympia Dukakis . . . since the banter between the two of them was outstanding . . . and, while on the surface seemed to be “less” than loving . . . it was evident the friendship, love and care they had for each other.

Among some of the great lines . . . remember: “I love you more than my luggage!” . . . was the one Clairee spoke . . . although not original to her . . . the 19th Century German Philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche crafted it . . . “That which does not kill us, makes us stronger.” Of course, Clairee paraphrased this . . . but it is a great thought . . . Especially when we consider the readings this weekend . . .

We have Jeremiah convinced that the Lord has duped him . . . and his life is a mess because of it . . . We have Saint Paul urging, in different words, that the real origin of being duped is the secular world . . . and the only way to overcome being duped is by focusing one’s mind, heart, body and soul on God . . . so that

we may be transformed and not only discern what is God's will . . . what is good and pleasing and perfect . . . but **live** lives that reflect God's will . . . and then, last of all . . . Peter . . . last week . . . the **rock** . . . the very foundation on which Jesus would build His Church . . . and now this week . . . an obstacle to the same Jesus because of his apparent lack of understanding not only of what Jesus must do . . . but what all who claim Jesus as Lord and Messiah will be called to do as well . . . Peter, very much included . . .

In all of this . . . there is a reminder of the truth of "That which does not kill us, makes us stronger." . . . yes the truth of this statement . . . and the proof of it as found in Jesus Christ . . .

My disclaimer is: in no way am I suggesting that suffering is necessary for our salvation . . . there does exist pain and suffering in the world that certainly cannot be explained or prayed away . . . **but** . . . in Jesus Christ, and because of Jesus Christ, there is hope . . . for we see that suffering can never define us . . . nor even limit us . . . but can be . . . will be . . . found along the journey of life . . . but will never stand in the way of the life one for us . . . the life yet to be.

Suffering “can have the power to strengthen us and open us up more to life!”

ii. There is a story about “a famous Italian violin

Maker, known to carefully select the wood for his violins from the north side of the tree trunk. When people questioned him about this, he pointed out that it was the north side of the tree that faced the brunt of the storm. It was that side of the tree that was buffeted by the wind and the rain. As a result, the wood on that side was stronger and more resilient. He found that if he shaped his violins from the wood on the north side of the tree, both the tone and the timbre of those instruments would be richer. Therefore, when the winds came and the rains struck, one could hear the trees of the forest groan under the violence of the storm. But the violin maker would only smile and say, “I love that sound, for it’s the sound of trees learning to be violins.”

iii. Jesus is not suggesting that suffering for the sake of suffering is good. Nor is he saying that it is something God uses to test our love . . . but, He **is** saying that the crosses we are faced with in life . . . and the ones “we carry in Jesus’ name, need not paralyze or destroy us.”

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As one homilist wrote, “If wind storms can change trees into violins, then certainly, the crosses we carry in Jesus’ name can transform us into genuine daughters and sons of God! Faith-filled and faithful disciples of the Lord!