

**22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**August 31, 2008**

**Readings: Jeremiah 20:7-9; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27**

**Don't KYMS**

About ten years ago, when I was going through formation to become a deacon, we would meet one Saturday a month down at the seminary with our wives to be exposed to some training that the Formation Team thought was appropriate. Sometimes they would push the limits a little into areas that some of us, who were fairly orthodox in our beliefs, did not find comfortable. One of my classmates was a 63 year old college professor; Joe taught ethics at the University of Michigan at the time. He had a sharp wit, but an eloquent tongue. As we prepared to begin one of those days that we knew would be challenging, he folded up a piece of paper to make a place card on the table in front of him. And on the side facing toward him he had printed the letters KYMSS. I asked what that was all about and he replied that it stood for Keep Your Mouth Shut Stupid. He hoped it would help him to keep his mouth shut and not cause trouble when we objected to the material being presented. He knew, however, that it wouldn't work; that he would speak out for what he believed and feel the scorn of the formation team. I liked him. He saved me a lot of grief because he was a lot quicker at reaching his breaking point than me, and he made his points so much more clearly than I could. I hardly ever needed to speak up.

In a way he was like the prophet Jeremiah in our first reading this morning who felt like the Lord had duped him. Jeremiah's vocation and mission was so strong that he could not hold back speaking the words of the Lord even though he tried to keep quiet. He sounded a bit like my friend as Jeremiah says: ***"I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it."*** And for doing the Lord's work, speaking in His name, Jeremiah was mocked and derided; he was the object of laughter.

Following God's will is not always going to be easy. But St. Paul urges us this morning to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. He tells us: ***"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."*** In other words, discern and do what God wants you to do, not what the world and your own desires want you to do.

Jesus says: ***"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."*** We are all called to pick up our crosses and make sacrifices to follow Jesus; to do the will of the Father. But we do it because we know that this earthly life is of no consequence compared to eternal life in heaven. We know this by our faith, but usually our faith is tested.

We need to be reminded; we need to be strengthened by prayer so that there is a fire burning in our hearts like the one burning in Jeremiah's heart. We need to feel so strongly about the truth that Jesus teaches us through His Church, that we can no longer be silent. We need to speak out against social injustice. We need to speak out against immorality.

We need to speak out in defense of the gospel of life; against abortion and euthanasia. And when we speak we can expect to be mocked and ridiculed and laughed at; just like Jeremiah and my classmate. This is part of the cross we accept when we choose to follow Jesus Christ; the One who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life.

But we know that God will reward us for our obedience to His will. Jesus said in the gospel: ***“For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay all according to his conduct.”*** Conduct yourselves well. The prize you will receive will be greater than all the riches, power, and fame that this world has to offer.

**Deacon Joe Hulway**