

Sunday, August 14, 2016

## Causing Discomfort for the Comfortable

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

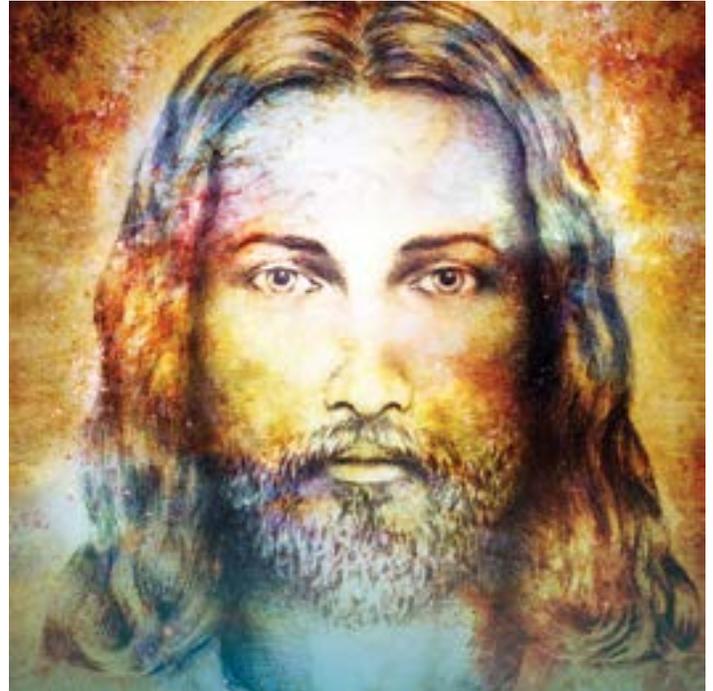
<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/081416.cfm>

Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

Hebrews 12:1-4

Luke 12:49-53

The experience of the human spiritual journey cannot be summed up easily for there are as many different experiences as there are humans. No two journeys are alike. Most stories of conversion span years or decades, yet that is not to discount or discredit those stories of being “knocked off a horse” and the light of God breaking through one’s blindness. The reality is that whatever our testimony of faith, the desire for God has been written into each human heart and we are constantly being drawn to our Creator, as the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) reminds us.



One could then deduce that when we finally turn to God and form a real relationship with Jesus Christ, all our longing ceases. We have found the object of our true desire. Won’t the rest of life be endless bliss?

To somewhat paraphrase the [Lynn Anderson song](#) from the 70s, “Jesus never promised you a rose garden.” At least you won’t find it on earth. Of course, to love God and serve him is the most fulfilling life one could live. We certainly hold to that as believers. But fulfillment does not mean constant happiness or a life without trial. Certainly, our conversion is a constant ongoing process. Even when we have found our way through several thresholds of conversion into an intentional discipleship, our journey has still, in many ways, only begun. There will be tests of faith along the way. Some will be small and others quite significant. Unfortunately, sometimes those tests and trials will come from a curious source: our family and friends. These are the ones who should be happiest for us in our journey.

Just this past Easter, like many Easters before, [thousands were baptized and received into full communion with the Church](#). The desire for God that was written onto their hearts at birth had led them not only to the person of Jesus, but also the body of Christ. But the decision to follow Jesus in this way can be a source of ridicule and anger on the part of those who loved them before this decision was made.

While working with the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) for over two decades, I had witnessed adult children being disowned by parents, friends ostracized by friends, and siblings constantly debating each other. The divisions were fueled by prejudice, ignorance, and fear of the unknown. This is not the

experience for all, but for those who do walk this difficult road, the earthly pain joined with the joy of heavenly grace is all too real.

Depending on where you are in the world, the chance of having such an experience can greatly increase. While Catholic Church communities are [flourishing in the southern United States](#), prejudice against Catholics is still common. In other parts of the country, as well as in parts of Europe and Oceania, [apathy toward religion and atheism are on the rise](#), making many ask the would-be-disciple a simple question in a puzzled tone: “Why?”

But here is a question that is worth asking: Shouldn't our faith at times, if being fully lived out, be a source of discomfort for those we meet? I remember an old priest friend of mine once told me that if his homilies never ruffled any feathers, he wasn't accurately preaching the Gospel. In Luke's Gospel this week, Jesus seems to support this line of thinking. Jesus spoke of not bringing peace to all, but instead division. He suggests that families will be at odds with one another over the message he brings. The reality is that the truth is not always what we want to hear. The good news of Jesus Christ is liberating for many, but is also a mirror for others in which they see a reality about themselves they do not wish to see. Sometimes, the message of the Gospel is too hard for some to digest. I think of St. Augustine before his conversion; hearing the Gospel, wanting to be holy and follow Jesus, [but just not yet](#).

Today, Christians all over the globe are victims of prejudice, ignorance, hatred, and fear. If we hide our faith because we are only comfortable in those [Kumbaya moments](#) of peace, love, and understanding, then we are like a fine piece of glassware untested by fire. It is the fire that solidifies us into the beautiful thing that God created us to be. Jesus never portrayed that this would be easy. Those in our days that preach a prosperity gospel or a faith that eliminates all darkness from our lives are selling something that Jesus never offered. Yes, the kingdom of God is in our midst and death has no power over us because of Jesus' cross and resurrection, but we exist in the now and not-yet. One day, all tears will be washed away and all will be made new. But until then, we are to lift each other up and help each other stand. We are to speak up for those who have no voice, even if society chooses to hurl stones at us. We are to speak love to hate, and truth to deceit. We must remember, Jesus is a “stone that will make people stumble, and a rock that will make them fall” (1 Pt 2:8). As a disciple, don't be afraid if someone's feathers get ruffled along the way. If you love someone, then you owe that person the whole truth, and nothing but the Truth.

*Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS*

# NOTICES

## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

The annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation will be celebrated on September 1. LPi has created bulletin covers for the day of prayer, now available on Art & Media Portal. Just search keyword "[creation](#)."

## REMEMBERING MOTHER TERESA

The Holy Father announced the upcoming canonization of five new saints, including Blessed Mother Teresa of Kolkata (née Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu), set for September 4, 2016. LPi has created an exclusive collection of banners, prayer cards, and more to celebrate the canonization. Visit the [LPi Store](#) to view the entire collection.

## LPi WEBINARS

Liturgical Publications hosts webinars on stewardship communications and sustainable offertory programs as well as online giving and event management. You can view a full list of scheduled webinars [here](#).

## PRAYER

We bless your name, O Lord,  
for sending your own incarnate Son,  
to become part of a family,  
so that, as he lived its life,  
he would experience its worries and its joys.

We ask you, Lord,  
to protect and watch over this family,  
so that in the strength of your grace  
its members may enjoy prosperity,  
possess the priceless gift of your peace,  
and, as the Church alive in the home,  
bear witness in this world to your glory.

We ask this thought Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

—*Prayer for Families from Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers.*

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