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A CAUSE OF DIVISION, OR A CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATION?

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Excerpts from Today's Readings

"Jeremiah ought to be put to death; He is weakening the resolve of the soldiers left in this city and of all the people, by saying such things to them; he is not seeking the welfare of our people, but their ruin."

JEREMIAH 38:4

"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us, and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God."

HEBREWS 12:1-2

*"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!
... **Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth?**
No, I tell you, but rather division."*

LUKE 12:49, 51

Reflection

[***Click here***](#) for the full texts of the readings for today.

Pondering the excerpts that captured my attention for today's reflection, I identified some characteristics required of the faithful followers and believers of the Divine.

Followers or believers may have to stake their lives. False accusations may endanger their lives. This implies a conviction and trust in what one believes in, e.g. Jeremiah was accused and ordered to be killed. Though he faced death, Jeremiah was steadfast in his faith and believed the messages of God. While his prophecies seemed sorrowful and dire, they pointed towards hope and the restoration of God's people.

Followers or believers need to free themselves of attachments, stay strong and persevere in their faith. They need to keep their eyes on Jesus, in whom they believe and who is the perfecter of faith. Lay aside any hindrances. What hindrances? Hindrances that prevent us from the growth of faith such as material and emotional attachments that keep us from trusting and believing, and desensitize us from realizing God's presence. Material attachments may include social media, money, fame, and success. Emotional encumbrances may be grudges, anger, pain, wounds, fears, hate, desires. Jesus is the perfecter of faith and the epitome of a great believer. Though he suffered and died on the cross, Jesus completed the race without doubt of his resurrection. ("Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 2:19)

Followers or believers must have the zeal, the radical commitment to follow and love God. We ought to love boundlessly and live out that radical love of God. Jesus's teachings are not easy to follow, I get that. We face uncomfortable and unpopular choices that create division, conflict, or bitter dissension. Take, for example, Jesus's teaching about mercy. Recently, I saw a monologue by a gay person. He was a music teacher and worked for a parish in the Midwest. When he married his partner, he was fired by the church *by phone*. I am aware that the Church is divided on this issue about the

LGBTQIA+ community. I know the Church's teachings. Still, upon hearing his story, I had questions in my mind: How are members of the LGBTQIA+ community seen by God? Are they excluded from God's love? How can we reconcile the teachings of the church and this reality? How can we show mercy? God created them. God sees them with love. I remember the scripture about casting the first stone (John 8:1-11). How did Jesus react in that event?

The readings for today are a source of both tension and hope. While the readings challenge us to examine our commitment to our faith, as followers and believers, we are encouraged to hold these tensions with humility, wisdom, grace, firmness in our faith, and openness to dialogue and understanding others. Following Jesus requires us to uphold the truth, and the love that he has preached. Do not grow weary, for Jesus endured and triumphed. With Jesus as our guide and the Holy Spirit as the fire of God's love, may the sparks in our hearts be strong enough in times of conflict and may we avoid the cheap price of acquiescing to the world.



For Pondering

- How do the following words sit with you: “Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.”
 - How do you see yourself as a follower/believer? Are you on fire? Are you a cause for conflict? A catalyst for transformation? A lukewarm, tepid soul?
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For Prayer

*O Love Divine, you are the center of my life.
When my ego becomes an obstacle to my faith,
Help me to let go of my attachments.
Give me the wisdom to know when to speak,
and when to remain silent.
Help me never to compromise my faith,
for the sake of myself.
Help me to serve with mercy.
Amen.*

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