

Homily
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - August 30, 2020
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"You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped."

Have you ever been duped? Maybe by a high-pressure salesperson or some anonymous email scammer trying to steal your identity? I admit it; I've been duped...but in a more innocuous way.

Thirty years ago, my older son wanted to join the Boy Scouts (he eventually became an Eagle Scout). Like every good dad, I decided to go to his first meeting and see what I could do to help. Under the promise that being a volunteer leader only takes "one hour a week," I signed up. At the time, little did I realize that "one hour a week" REALLY referred to the amount of **free time** that I would have left after spending innumerable hours guiding, not only my son but, other youth to become "physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight!" Yet, I regret **not one moment** of those many hours I spent, and still spend, to help properly form the youth of the Kansas City area in the ideals of Scouting!

Today, we hear Jeremiah complain that his faithfulness to the Lord, his fidelity to his vocation as a prophet for the Lord, makes him miserable. The king and priests reject his pleas for conversion and declare as unpatriotic Jeremiah's announcement of the coming fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. That disdainful attitude filters down to the common people who continually mock and ridicule Jeremiah. Looking back on his ministry, Jeremiah is convinced that the Lord duped him into accepting the thankless mission of prophet. Jeremiah is, quite simply, overwhelmed. But, however much he wants to abandon his calling, to "speak in [the Lord's] name no more," Jeremiah feels the fire of the Lord "burning in [his] heart, imprisoned in [his] bones." After his venting in today's first reading, Jeremiah, in spite of all of his struggles with faith, doubt and abandonment, eventually **yields to the will of God**, arriving at a sense of peace and renewed commitment to his loving relationship with God.

Also today, we hear of Peter who likewise must have felt that he was duped by the Lord. Just last Sunday, Jesus gave Peter, the rock upon whom Jesus will build his church, the keys to the kingdom. But immediately following, in today's Gospel, Jesus refers to poor, compassionate Peter as "Satan" for suggesting that Jesus' life must be saved! This dialogue between Jesus and Peter, reminds us, as we hear elsewhere in scripture, that we tend to think "not as God does, but as human beings do."

According to the Father's plan, Jesus came into the world to suffer and die for our salvation. Jesus' response exposes Peter's compassion as a temptation from Satan to reject the Father's plan. Jesus then reminds us that whoever focuses on keeping one's life whole and healthy, on staying free to do whatever one pleases, on being safe, and striving for personal satisfaction **will in fact** destroy one's life in the kingdom of heaven. However, the one who lives one's life for Jesus' sake will find the meaningful existence that God intends for us; our salvation.

Just like Jeremiah and Peter, each one of us goes through struggles with faith, doubt and feelings of abandonment. But, as St. Paul urges us in today's reading from his letter to the Romans, we should not give in, not conform our lives to the pressures of the modern world; rather, by "the renewal of [our] mind[s]" through prayer and by offering ourselves "as a living sacrifice" to God, we, the baptized Christian community, can discern the will of God. Then, together, we will also come to a sense of peace and renewed commitment to **our** loving relationship with the Lord.