

October 2017

You don't have to go it alone!

Have we doubted the presence of God sometimes, especially when things are not going well with us? Yes, that happens to me all the time. In the winter of 2016, I had an opportunity to visit a refugee friend of mine in a refugee camp in Kenya. She was in her late sixties. Her life has been filled with suffering. She lost four of her five children and husband to conflicts in South Sudan. She has life-threatening illnesses. She complained of bad experiences in her refugee camp – isolation, joblessness, harassment, and limited support from the concerned humanitarian organizations. Yet, she also told me that in her sufferings, she still has faith and confidence in God – that one day He will relieve her of her troubles. I was touched by her great faith and generosity.

Today's First Reading presents us to Jeremiah being in great suffering for preaching God's Word. He's had it with being persecuted and wants to run away from his preaching job He feels isolated and abandoned in following God's call. Sometimes in our lives, we too experience unbearable tragic moments. This can be our poor health, a difficult child to raise, strong opposition and financial instability among others. In all these situations, we sometimes feel hopeless and abandoned by God. Yet even then something deep inside causes us to continue and invites us to trust.

What Jeremiah experiences through his suffering, is what Jesus states explicitly in today's Gospel. To follow Jesus is to take up our crosses and to deny ourselves – our priorities, preferences, and comforts. It is our willingness (sometimes reluctant) to give it all up, even our lives, for the sake of God and others. Most of us are not called to do anything so heroic but we do have our own daily crosses to bear. When we do that, as Paul says in today's Epistle, we are sharing in the sufferings of Christ – offering our bodies or whole beings as living sacrifices to God. Like Peter and Jeremiah we want to run from pain yet at some level we know and have even seen in our own lives that God brings about good from evil. And so we trust, knowing that we are not alone. This is what Peter and Jeremiah didn't get. Like Peter and Jeremiah, we too have our natural temptation – to refuse to believe that the cross – sufferings play a necessary part in God's plan. That's how people think. However, we are called to renew our minds all the times – to think as God thinks and to do what He wills.

God knows all our sufferings. He wants us to accept and offer them to Him. Let's be confident that we will find our lives in losing them, and our souls will be satisfied.

In all our sufferings and trials, remember the last words of Jesus to his disciples "And I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:20). That's a promise. You won't have to go it alone.

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