

Being faithful to God is not an easy thing

It was not easy for the early prophets

It was not easy for those following Christ as he walked this earth

It was not easy for the early Christians

It is not an easy thing today

But this is our baptismal call

To be priest, prophet and king

Priest: To live lives of sacrifice for others

Prophet: To speak the truth

King: To live lives of service

The prophet Jeremiah did not have an easy life

He was called at an early age

Around 13 year's old

The nation of Jerusalem was being re-established in Jerusalem

King Josiah was leading them back to God

Back to their identity as God' chosen ones

Jeremiah witnessed the return of the glory of Israel

But then Josiah died

And the kings following him led the people astray

No longer following God

They began to follow their own passions

Their own ways

And Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of Israel

At the time of our reading today

They were under siege by the Babylonians

The king came to Jeremiah

Tell us what to do

Jeremiah tells them to surrender

Turn back to God and your religious identity

They would be better off being faithful to God

Even if it meant falling to their enemies

The military leaders and chief priests did not want to hear this

So they take Jeremiah and toss him into a cistern

And he sank into the mud

Jeremiah laid it out there for the people of God

Follow God and forget worldly glory

Be faithful to God and His way

Or the way we think is best

Not easy

It was not easy for the early Christians

St Paul speaks of it in terms of a race

That is our life

Right now the Olympics are taking place

Look at the races

Whether it is swimming or track or any other event

Athletes do not want to be encumbered with stuff

And the victor finishes the race strong

The crowds at the sporting events

Cheering for them

Willing them to victory

In the spiritual life

The cloud of witnesses are there for us as well

The saints and martyrs that have already finished their race

They are there pulling for us

Praying for us

Helping bring us home

In this spiritual race there is something that encumbers us

And that is sin

It clings to us and can prevent us from finishing strong

It can prevent us from finishing at all

It is not easy to be a Christian in the world

It was not easy for those walking with Christ

Especially when he spoke with challenging words

Like today

This is one of the most challenging of all the Gospels

The Prince of Peace

Telling us he has come to set the world on fire

Not peace, but division

A household of 5 divided 2 to 3

Father against son

Mother against daughter

Division in families

Not an easy situation

The choice for Christ is not an easy one

Like the choice the Israelites Jeremiah was speaking to had to make

Choices that make demands of us

Like one training for a run

Then running and finishing

Only to begin all over again

It was a choice Christ made

And it led to his crucifixion

To follow him is not easy

If we follow moral religious convictions

There will be division

When we speak on the right to life

When we teach that this is not just another issue among many

But is one of the central issues to consider when making a decision on how to vote

When we teach the truth that marriage is between one man and one woman

When we teach that missing a Sunday Mass or a Holy Day of obligation is a sin

When we teach that living together outside of marriage is a sin

When we teach that euthanasia is a sin

When we challenge our families on these and so much more

We are not surprised that there is division

When we teach that gossip is spiritual murder

When we teach that using others for the pursuit of profit is a sin

When we teach that there is a just war theory

When we teach that there are reasons to come to Mass and not receive Holy Communion

That Communion is more than a sign of unity

More than a symbol

It is the body and blood of our Lord and savior

When we teach that these and so much more

We do not use any of these teachings as a club

We teach them with love

But we teach them

We are not called to be 'good people'

Yes, we want that, but we want more

To be a priest, prophet and king in our world is a sign of division

To follow Christ is not the way of the world

It is not the easy path

It is the path of the saints and martyrs

It is the narrow path

It is the path that leads home