

MARCH 20, 2021
Saturday of the 4th Week of Lent
John 7: 40-53

“STAND WITH JESUS.”

Disciples and followers of God were always tormented and persecuted in the Old Testament, and prophets are one of them. When God wanted His people to follow and obey the commands, prophets were spokesperson which put them to conflict and danger. This was the challenge for those who follow God. In our First Reading, Prophet Jeremiah was resisted and defied by the people of Anathoth, his own people. Why was he opposed? “In 622 BC, King Josiah of Judah undertook a religious reform (described in 2 Kings 22) after the Book of the Law was discovered, having lain hidden for years. It seems that Jeremiah took an active role in the reform. By championing the reform, which included the suppression of local shrines, Jeremiah incurred the hatred of his fellow citizens, the people of Anathoth.”¹ When he spoke about God’s name and commandments, the people did not like it and they conspired to kill and silence him. We heard in the reading their plan: “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name will no longer be remembered!”² Prophet Jeremiah faced and answered them with kindness, gentleness, and humility “like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter.”³

When we are confronted with challenges in professing our faith, following God’s commands, and living our mission, what is our reaction? Do we act as disciples of Christ? Or do we react with amazement but did nothing like the armed officers or disrespectful, hateful, and unbelief like the chief priests and Pharisees or timid, coward, and hesitant like Nicodemus. He likes to defend Jesus as his heart is telling him but not taking the risk

¹ livingspace.sacredspace.ie

² Jeremiah 11: 19 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

³ Jeremiah 11: 18 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

which, his head is telling him. In all circumstances, we need to stand and defend Christ in all adversaries and opponents of this world. And by standing with Jesus, we may experience ridicule and opposition, hostility, suffering and hardships such as the loss of friends and family, job, reputation and even life. But remember, Jesus Christ promised there is richly rewards for those who stand and suffer for His name's sake, for the greater glory of God, for the Kingdom that will last for ever.

My brothers and sisters, it now our choice: obey our Lord and Saviour, His word and believe in His promise of blessing and eternal life or to follow the influence of those who pledge success and happiness apart from God's truth and laws which are earthly and material gains, temporary and short term. Like the Prophet Jeremiah, may we stand firm and defend the Lord, live the Word, and entrust everything to God all the days of our lives.