

THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Twenty-second Sunday of the Year

Peter surely was told off in today's Gospel. '*Get behind me Satan.*' It didn't take long to fall off the pedestal upon which Jesus had put him. This week's Gospel passage comes immediately after last Sunday's Gospel when Jesus called Peter '*Blessed*' for proclaiming that Jesus was the Christ. He told him that he was the rock upon which Jesus would build his Church. How did Peter fall so quickly? He fell because he was reasoning things out the way people of the world would reason. He lacked wisdom. The way of the world would be, '*Save your life. Don't let anyone kill you.*' The way of the Lord would be, '*Make the sacrificial love of God real. Sacrifice yourself for others.*'

It's easy for us to think the way of the world thinks. Everything around us tells us to take not give, to be concerned about ourselves first and others second, third or fourth. Fit God in somewhere, if you care. That is the thought process of the world. '*Times have changed. I'm only doing what is perfectly acceptable in our society.*' With these words people explain away their living conditions, their hedonistic lifestyle, their abusive actions and so on.

When a person hides his or her selfish or immoral behaviour behind the 'acceptable by our society' argument, that person is invoking the society that St Paul calls '*this age*' or '*the pattern of the world.*' This is the world that our Lord came to save. It is the world of selfishness, a world of pride, a world where God is not wanted. It is a world of darkness. It is a world to which Christians cannot belong.

Today's other reading is this:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. [Romans 12:1-2]

We were joined to a new world when we were baptized. Each of us is a key part of this new world, the Kingdom of God. There are many people each day of our lives who look to us to illuminate their darkness with the Light of Christ. The problem is that we can easily be enticed by all that is around us. We can easily reject all that is within us. Thus we so often straddle major issues in life.

The picture which comes to mind is that of a person trying to get into a rowing boat. One foot on land and the other in the boat. Slowly the boat drifts away from land. There is laughter and the person has to be fished out of the water. I know that I often do this myself and I am sure that others do as well. We have one foot that we are convinced is planted safely in God's world, but we stretch out our other foot to another world and we fall. Even though we recognize our dignity as sons and daughters of God, we often let ourselves become involved in actions that are far less than holy. We think that we are all right, because we are firmly planted on the Lord's dock, but the forces the other foot has stepped into draw us away from the dock and we end up in the drink.

We do not embrace the Christian Faith for high theological reasons or arguments. We embrace Jesus Christ for one reason only: we are wounded by his love. When we made the conscious choice of Jesus Christ, we set out on a course of action that does not allow turning back. Nevertheless, we do not care. We are wounded by his love. He is within us, burning out for us to proclaim his presence. Even if we wanted to ignore him, we cannot. We are his.