

TRINITY 2
Jer 20:10-13
Rom 5:12-15
Mt 10:26-33

Anyone who thinks Christianity is a feel good' religion has not read the Scriptures carefully or prayerfully. Several of God's servants have been persecuted, vilified and betrayed. They have hit rock bottom yet somehow remained faithful. Because of this they experienced an upturn. They are J shaped persons and interestingly several of them have names that begin with the letter J – Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, Jonah, Job, Jeremiah and of course Jesus.

Jeremiah felt duped by God into becoming his prophet only to find that it brought him a life of misery, persecution, head butting of walls, humiliation and betrayal. Jeremiah was angry about his life and hit rock bottom, but when he remembered that God had promised him that he would not allow enemies to destroy him, a J shaped upturn occurred. Once again, Jeremiah could utter God a word of praise.

Jesus makes a similar promise to his disciples. He warns them that because they are his disciples they would suffer. This isn't a good recommendation to embrace discipleship, but Jesus encourages them to think rationally. He tells them that their enemies will persecute them, but the worst thing they can do is kill their body. They cannot kill their soul, so the one they should be concerned about is the One who is able to destroy their soul as well as their body. The future of Jesus' disciples hinges on whether or not we acknowledge or deny him before others. This seems like small comfort, but Jesus does tell his followers that God cares about what happens to sparrows, so not even the hairs of a disciple's head shall be harmed without God knowing of it.

Jesus assures them not to be afraid. They must trust that God's Kingdom will prevail over evil and God's faithful must not allow the preaching of the gospel of the Resurrection to be muted by any external or internal pressures, especially fear.

We are certainly living in strange times, but the Church always has. Believers are being persecuted by external forces that are hell bent on not only destroying the Church, but also destroying the Judaeo-Christian foundations of Western culture. In an opinion piece published in The Australian newspaper (June 13th 2020), Brendan O'Neill describes the current situation as a cultural war against the 'Four Olds,' namely old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. He says that today's revolutionaries are in destructive revolt against any way of thinking that does not fit their programme. Facts and truth are irrelevant, with the consequence that the very existence of Christianity is under threat. In a comment on this article, one respondent observes that this 'cancer of wickedness' has infected the leaders of our public institutions and political systems. I would include our Catholic institutions, their leaders and the self-styled reformist laity among them.

In 2021/2 the Australian Catholic Church will be holding a Plenary Council to explore what the Holy Spirit is saying to Catholics about the way forward in these times. While the objective is laudable, among some of the good things published by the working groups, are

suggestions in harmony with the 'progressive' revolutionaries. There are strident voices in the Church who want to repeat the catastrophic innovations of other denominations and disconnect the Church from its traditions, culture, ecclesiology, interpretation of Scripture, liturgy, morals and ethics. What is proposed is not a Church that is One, Holy and Catholic, but one that must become woke, based on the belief that only a Church that is relevant to the current elite fashion will flourish. It will cease to flourish if it does so.

An adaptation of a quote by Dean Inge, an early 20th century Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, London is a clear prophetic warning to Australian Catholics at this time. He said, "A Church that marries the spirit of the age will quickly find herself a widow in the next."

We must become God's 'J' shaped people – fearless, faithful and fruitful in our service of Christ and the Kingdom and the upturn will come.

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