

Homily by Robin CRM— 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

Readings: Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10; Hebrews 12:1-4; Luke 12:49-53

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
in today's Gospel Jesus speaks very strikingly: *"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! ... Do you think that I have come to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division"* (Luke 12:49–51).

At first this may sound disturbing—after all, we call Jesus the *Prince of Peace*. But here He is not speaking of worldly peace, or of comfort and compromise. He is speaking of the purifying, burning fire of the Holy Spirit and of truth—a fire that cleanses, that divides light from darkness, truth from falsehood, love from hatred.

Our first reading gives us the example of the prophet Jeremiah. Because he proclaimed God's word truthfully, he was hated, opposed, and thrown into a cistern to die. The word of God often provokes division—between those who welcome truth and those who resist it.

St. John Chrysostom once said:

"The Gospel is a sword not because it wounds, but because it severs the soul from the attachments of sin."

Jeremiah suffered because he chose fidelity to God over the approval of men. Likewise, Jesus warns us that following Him means facing rejection, even within families and societies.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are reminded that we are running a race, surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses." We are urged to lay aside every burden and sin and to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

The Fathers of the Church often described this Christian race as a contest in the arena. St. Augustine says:

"The martyrs ran, they persevered, they conquered. Let us run the same race, even if we are not called to shed our blood, that we may share in their crown."

This race is not easy. It means resisting sin, resisting the temptation to give in to the pressures of the world.

And what are the divisions that we face today?

- Racism: when people divide others on the basis of colour, language, or origin.
- Hatred and violence: families, communities, and even nations torn apart.
- Greed for power and wealth: leaders more interested in positions than in serving.
- Superiority complex: the belief that my culture, my class, or my status is higher than others.

These are the false “fires” of the world. They destroy. But the fire of Christ purifies. He calls us to reject hatred, to see every human person as a child of God.

St. Basil the Great reminds us:

“The bread you do not use is the bread of the hungry; the garment hanging in your closet is the garment of the naked; the gold you have hidden is the treasure of the poor.”

The fire of Christ demands that we challenge injustice, pride, and selfishness in ourselves and in society.

But standing for truth and love comes at a cost. Like Jeremiah, we may be opposed. Like Jesus, we may even be rejected by our own family.

St. Gregory the Great said:

“The peace which is truly from God is not a peace with sin, but a peace of the heart rooted in righteousness.”

If we seek peace by compromising the truth, it is not Christ’s peace—it is only an illusion. The real peace of Christ comes through the fire of conversion and purification.

My brothers and sisters,
today’s readings call us to courage. The fire of Christ must first burn within us—purifying our hearts from prejudice, pride, selfishness, and greed. Then we can be witnesses in a divided world.

As we run this race, let us remember the “great cloud of witnesses”—the saints who have gone before us. And let us take to heart the words of St. Augustine:

“Set love aflame in your hearts, and you will not be overcome by the cold of the world.”

May the fire of the Holy Spirit burn away all divisions and make us true disciples of Christ—ready to stand for truth, for justice, and for love.

Amen.