

We see the common theme of our readings today is the opposition a person will experience from society for being a follower of our Lord because being a follower of our Lord means not only doing good to others but in addition means accepting the moral teaching of our Church because that is how our Lord chose to teach us. So we are not just to listen to the first reading and see it as something that happened to Jeremiah over 2500 years ago, but it reminds us of what we are to expect when we defend those moral teachings of our Church. When we profess our belief in those teachings we are to do it in a gentle way. Just as we could not imagine Jeremiah remaining silent for fear of criticism, so it would be just as wrong for us to keep silent when the moral teachings of the Church are opposed and criticized. In order to know that truth we have to make sure we are learning the faith and to remember that learning continues by taking the time to read things like the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Knowing that we are to expect to be persecuted as Jeremiah was for teaching what God wants will not make it easy to live with that criticism but we will know that criticism is expected. Prayer will help us persevere in the faith when we are criticized.

Our Gospel passage today has a similar theme because it teaches we may encounter strife and disagreement when we profess what our Lord teaches. It would be unrealistic to think that we would have a totally carefree existence in our society. How are we to respond to those who might not agree with God's teaching? We should never be reluctant to profess those moral teachings God gives us.

By coincidence today the second reading has a theme similar to the theme of the first reading and Gospel passage when it refers to our Lord's enduring the cross, despising the shame, that give us the example to help us overcome those who despise what our Church teaches us and reminds us that we should not be surprised by hostility.

When our second reading today talks about laying aside the weight of sin, St. Thomas Aquinas says that can refer to occasions of sin and the fact that sin is present all around us. One way we overcome that is by the way each day we practice our faith, especially by practicing self-denial such as giving up things we like. St. Augustine says that our Lord hanging on the cross teaches us that we should be ready with courage against those who oppose God's teaching and be strong with the grace God will give us.

That second reading today gives us also the reason we should be reading the scriptures in that they are designed to inspire us with strength by contemplating our Lord's suffering. St. Theresa of Avila describes how contemplating our Lord's agony on the cross changed her as she says: By the time my soul was growing weary and though it desired to rest, the miserable habits which now enslaved it would not allow it to do so. It happened that entering the oratory one day I saw an image which had been procured for a certain festival that was observed. It represented Christ sorely wounded and so conducive was it to devotion that when I looked at it I was deeply moved to see him thus, so well did it picture what he suffered for us. So great was my distress when I thought how ill I had repaid him for those wounds that I felt as if my heart was breaking. That experience of St. Theresa of Avila is an example of keeping our eyes fixed on our Lord as the second reading tells us to do today because doing that helps convert our hearts. St. Theresa of Avila said keeping her eyes fixed on our Lord on the cross converted her heart to our Lord.

In this celebration our Lord gives us the grace to keep our eyes fixed on him as St. Theresa of Avila did so our hearts will be converted to him and our Lord gives us the grace in his body and blood to profess our faith even though we might be criticized for that.