

Reflection for the Twenty Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

St Paul sums up the message we should take away from today's scriptures when he writes, *"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."* It's a thread which runs through all three of today's readings.

Jeremiah, in our first reading, is sorely tempted to conform himself to this world. He is worn down by the hostility and rejection he is subjected to daily on account of taking God's unpopular word to the people. In our first reading he laments, *"I have become a laughing-stock all the day; everyone mocks me...For the word of God has become for me a reproach and derision all day long."* He has actually toyed with the idea of giving up on his calling, *"I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name."* However, he finds that God's call is overwhelming and that *"there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."* Jeremiah is really struggling with his calling, and he needs to submit himself not to this world but to a *"renewal of mind"*, and indeed of heart, if he is to be at peace with God and himself.

Similarly, Peter, in today's gospel needs to *"be transformed by the renewal of his mind."* Newly installed by Jesus as *"the rock on which I will build my Church"* and entrusted with *"the keys of the kingdom of heaven"*, Peter is wholly unprepared for what he hears next. When Jesus *"began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised"* he is horrified. To his worldly mind this would bring to a premature end all that Jesus has accomplished in his ministry to date and would render him a failure. We are told that he *"took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him."* Peter's mind was too closely conformed to this world and in his new position as the rock on which Jesus will build his church he stands in need of a total transformation and of a renewal of his understanding. So far is he removed from the renewal which Jesus wants from him, and so closely is he conformed to this world, that Jesus actually describes him as *"a hindrance"* and as *"Satan"*. stating quite bluntly *"that you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

This juxtaposition of *"being conformed to this world"* and *"being transformed by the renewal of our mind"*, in other words aligning ourselves to the mind of Christ, is further underlined in what Jesus says next, when he poses the question, *"for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"* Rather than worldly rewards, following Jesus involves denying oneself and taking up one's cross and following on the road to Calvary.

As stated at the beginning, St Paul sums up the message we should take away from today's scriptures with the words, *"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."* Let each of us apply these words to our own lives.