

20th Sunday Ordinary Time Year C

August 17-18, 2019 5:15p, 8:00a, 10:00a, 5:00p

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

“Welcome to Saskatchewan. How long do you plan on being in Canada?” I hesitated before answering but could not tell a lie. “About 45 minutes, sir. You see, I am planning on visiting the geographic tri-point.” Oh, one of those. I had entered into Saskatchewan from North Dakota solely in order to drive to a geographical oddity, namely a tri-point at which Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and North Dakota all meet, 14 miles away. “Sir, I think you should come inside for a moment....” Uh, oh.

The officer proceeded to show me a map, wondering if I had properly calculated the route. I showed him my plans—“Yes, that’s correct.” I felt empowered that I had correctly identified the various dirt roads leading to this point. Then he gave me a stern warning... “This tri-point is in the middle of a farmer’s field. It rained last night and the roads are muddy.

If you get stuck, you’re on your own. There is no cell service out here. And if you make it to the tri-point, whatever you do... Do not cross over in the United States. You will trip the alarm—Good luck!” Somehow, my sense of adventure and penchant for seeking out odd geographical locations, sufficiently outweighed my concerns about getting stuck in the mud. All went well and I took the photograph to prove it!

Today, we meet Jeremiah, a prophet who was facing his own challenges. No, he was not seeking a cartographical oddity, but his desire to speak the truth landed him in a strange spot. He was the Lord’s mouthpiece, but the people wanted no part of it, attacking him. Lowered into the cistern, he sank into the mud, humiliated and demoralized.

Every priest is given a threefold ministry at his ordination. He **teaches** the faith, **sanctifies** (sacraments) and **rules**, exercising servant leadership. The *munus docendi* is the term used for the teaching mandate the church. This week’s bulletin details the disappointing results of a survey in which

Catholics described their beliefs about the Holy Eucharist. These results are indicative of a tremendous failure on the part of the Church to exercise the duty of teaching that is been entrusted to us. Obviously, it is also incumbent upon the lay faithful to seek knowledge and truth; the responsibility is not solely that of the pastors of the church.

However, when we cease teaching the fullness of the faith, the people slowly become confused, complacent, and over time, less convinced. Our young adults face tremendous pressures in society to conform to the latest notions of gender, sexuality, and tolerance. It is not enough merely to tolerate the views of others. Increasingly, assent without qualification is demanded. Failure to do so results in an individual being labeled an out of touch individual, merely for holding sincere convictions of faith.

We must resist this characterization, while at the same time articulating the reasons for our convictions. We must do so in a language that is accessible to our contemporary culture. At the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII delivered an address with many memorable and often quoted lines. One of those, however, was rather poorly translated in the English volumes of Vatican II, which we studied.

The standard translation reads: “The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another.” That is certainly true enough, but several key Latin words were simply omitted in the standard English translations. It reads in full:

“For the deposit of the Faith itself, that is, the truths contained in our **venerable doctrine**, is one thing, while the manner in which these same truths are expressed, of course always in the same sense **and with the same meaning** (eodem sensu eademque sententia) [emphasis added], is something else.”¹

¹ Pope John XXIII, October 11, 1962. LATIN ORIGINAL “Est enim aliud ipsum depositum Fidei, seu veritates quae veneranda doctrina nostra continentur, aliud modus, quo eadem enuntiantur, eodem tamen sensu eademque sententia.”

The key missing phrases include “the truths contained in our venerable doctrine” and especially, “of course always in the same sense and with the same meaning.” Doctrine can always be better expressed, more fully explained. But the core of the teaching remains the same.

The Church’s teaching is **not stuck** in the mud; it is living and breathing, but always with the core truths intact. If we fail to articulate those truths, they remain little more than words on a page, a page that increasingly gathers dust on a library bookshelf.

Even how we receive Holy Communion is important. It speaks volumes about our belief. If we receive directly on the tongue, we do so deliberately and reverently. If we receive in the hand, we do just that. We receive; we do not reach out to grab the host; it is a humble act of reception. We step aside and immediately consume the host reverently.

These are not picky little points of protocol. They illustrate the tremendous respect due to the Holy Eucharist, the very Body and Blood of Christ given to us for our salvation. May we never take this tremendous gift for granted.