

# BLESSINGS IN SUFFERINGS

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE A.

Jeremiah 20:7-9  
Romans 12:1-2  
Matthew 16:21-27

## OPENING PRAYER

*(The community joins in singing, "Unless a Grain of Wheat", The song may be found on the Internet.)*

Leader: Spirit of God, every time I think I am suffering, I see another who has much more to suffer than I. Everyone is called to die to self, as a grain of wheat must die in order to produce fruit. We all must learn to open our hearts to divine outcomes, divine timing, to allow our agendas to become divine agendas. It is a great grace, O Spirit of God, when we can allow you to work in our lives, and to accept your guidance, O Spirit. Help us to surrender our resistance to the action of grace in our endeavors, and open our hearts to your creative impulses. Guide us in the path you wish us to follow, even if we resist that path.

All: Amen.

Adapted from "I Am Secure in the Flow of Graceful Good", in **Blessings** by Julia Cameron. (Putnam, NY: Penguin, 1998), p. 129.

## COMMENTARY

Too many people fail to understand these criteria which Jesus set down for anyone to be his disciple. He himself must suffer greatly and even die

in order to rise up again. But no matter how often he said this to his apostles, they did not understand it. They even rejected it. Peter goes so far as to say to Jesus, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” Peter, like the others, like ourselves, did not want to face the idea of suffering. They had a different agenda; they expected that Jesus would be another David, sitting on a throne, bringing Israel to its former glory. Peter anticipates the victory ahead, and just cannot comprehend why Jesus is so set on suffering. He is trying to change Jesus’ mind, saying, in effect, “Oh, no, please do not even think that. You are destined to be a great king, and we are going to be with you.” This was a temptation for Jesus, so he calls Peter a satan, a tempter, and tells him to get behind him. He would not be led from the path God had set.

Often we encounter temptations, which lead us away from the path we know we must take. These are times when fidelity to God, to others, to our own truth, requires us to accept the suffering from within or without that is occasioned by our fidelity. Spirit of God, keep us faithful to the path you have set for us.

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. Recall a time when you allowed someone to draw you away from a path you knew you had to follow.
2. What are some tough things that you know you must face to be faithful to God?
3. Name a time when you witnessed the fidelity and suffering of someone who had to follow a difficult path.
4. What are the stumbling blocks you face in following a difficult path?

## RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. When an inspiration comes to you this week, and you know it is a good thing, do not be persuaded when others try to change your mind.

2. Spend time with a family member or friend who is struggling to be faithful in a difficult life situation.
3. When faced with a difficult decision that tests your fidelity this week, pause. Deliberately and consciously call on the Spirit of God.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(The community again sings, “Unless the Grain of Wheat”, available on the Internet The leader invites the community to respond, “Lord, help us to be faithful,” to the invocations which follow.)*

Leader:            Each time we are tempted,  
  
                          When we are downcast,  
  
                          When nothing goes as we expected,  
  
                          In failure,  
  
                          In success,  
  
                          In joy,  
  
                          In sorrow,  
  
                          In pain.

*(The leader invites additional invocations from the community. Members respond to each as above.)*

Leader:            Spirit of God, Help us to believe that you are with us in all things; that you are right beside us in all temptations, in all that would tempt us to despair. We thirst for you. We want to cling to you, to praise you in all situations of life. Give us the grace never to be a satan for another, or to let others keep us from what we know to be your will. Let

your goodness permeate all we do. Keep us always in your grace and love. In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

*(The session ends with the sharing of some sign of peace.)*