

---

22 Thursday

THURSDAY 29th Week in Ordinary Time

Rom 6: 19 – 23

Ps 1: 1 – 4, 6

Luke 12: 49-53

Today's gospel may come as a surprise. We're accustomed to thinking of Jesus and His message (especially in St Luke's account) as bringing peace and reconciliation. But here He is talking of bringing division instead! And it's division in the intimacy of our families, too. How can we understand this? It's easy just to pick and choose the parts of the bible that we find more attractive or less demanding, but we need to accept and say 'yes' to the whole of God's word. For His word challenges us, as well as giving comfort and strength. The challenge is His grace and His power at work within us, not our own ability and "safety".

Our Christian faith and love is a challenge, first to ourselves, to be faithful to God's word and to Jesus' love, and to be Christ-bearers to people around us. It's also a challenge to others, perhaps especially to those who are nearest and dearest to us. They don't always understand why we believe, why we act in Christian love. Friction and disagreement can easily arise, and sometimes it's perhaps through our own lack of sensitivity and concern for others. And it sometimes seems that Christian faith almost invites opposition and division.

Jesus said He came to bring fire to the earth. Fire warms, comforts and purifies; but it also burns and destroys. His fire is surely ardent faith and enthusiasm, a burning love of God and people, total loving commitment. Let us pray to be inflamed and inspired by His love, so that our living faith may warm and strengthen others and challenge us all to bring peace from out of division and difference.