

**Being faithful to God is not an easy thing**

**It was not easy for the early prophets**

**It was not easy for those following Christ as he walked this earth**

**It was not easy for the early Christians**

**It is not an easy thing today**

**But this is our baptismal call**

**To be priest, prophet and king**

**Priest: To live lives of sacrifice for others**

**Prophet: To speak the truth**

**King: To live lives of service**

**The prophet Jeremiah did not have an easy life**

**He was called at an early age**

**Around 13 year's old**

**The nation of Jerusalem was being re-established in Jerusalem**

**King Josiah was leading them back to God**

**Back to their identity as God' chosen ones**

**Jeremiah witnessed the return of the glory of Israel**

**But then Josiah died**

**And the kings following him led the people astray**

**No longer following God**

**They began to follow their own passions**

**Their own ways**

**And Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of Israel**

**At the time of our reading today**

**They were under siege by the Babylonians**

**The king came to Jeremiah**

**Tell us what to do**

**Jeremiah tells them to surrender**

**Turn back to God and your religious identity**

**They would be better off being faithful to God**

**Even if it meant falling to their enemies**

**The military leaders and chief priests did not want to hear this**

**So they take Jeremiah and toss him into a cistern**

**And he sank into the mud**

**Jeremiah laid it out there for the people of God**

**Follow God and forget worldly glory**

**Be faithful to God and His way**

**Or the way we think is best**

**Not easy**

**It was not easy for the early Christians**

**St Paul speaks of it in terms of a race**

**That is our life**

**Right now the Olympics are taking place**

**Look at the races**

**Whether it is swimming or track or any other event**

**Athletes do not want to be encumbered with stuff**

**And the victor finishes the race strong**

**The crowds at the sporting events**

**Cheering for them**

**Willing them to victory**

**In the spiritual life**

**The cloud of witnesses are there for us as well**

**The saints and martyrs that have already finished their race**

**They are there pulling for us**

**Praying for us**

**Helping bring us home**

**In this spiritual race there is something that encumbers us**

**And that is sin**

**It clings to us and can prevent us from finishing strong**

**It can prevent us from finishing at all**

**It is not easy to be a Christian in the world**

**It was not easy for those walking with Christ**

**Especially when he spoke with challenging words**

**Like today**

**This is one of the most challenging of all the Gospels**

**The Prince of Peace**

**Telling us he has come to set the world on fire**

**Not peace, but division**

**A household of 5 divided 2 to 3**

**Father against son**

**Mother against daughter**

**Division in families**

**Not an easy situation**

**The choice for Christ is not an easy one**

**Like the choice the Israelites Jeremiah was speaking to had to make**

**Choices that make demands of us**

**Like one training for a run**

**Then running and finishing**

**Only to begin all over again**

**It was a choice Christ made**

**And it led to his crucifixion**

**To follow him is not easy**

**If we follow moral religious convictions**

**There will be division**

**When we speak on the right to life**

**When we teach that this is not just another issue among many**

**But is one of the central issues to consider when making a decision on how to vote**

**When we teach the truth that marriage is between one man and one woman**

**When we teach that missing a Sunday Mass or a Holy Day of obligation is a sin**

**When we teach that living together outside of marriage is a sin**

**When we teach that euthanasia is a sin**

**When we challenge our families on these and so much more**

**We are not surprised that there is division**

**When we teach that gossip is spiritual murder**

**When we teach that using others for the pursuit of profit is a sin**

**When we teach that there is a just war theory**

**When we teach that there are reasons to come to Mass and not receive Holy Communion**

**That Communion is more than a sign of unity**

**More than a symbol**

**It is the body and blood of our Lord and savior**

**When we teach that these and so much more**

**We do not use any of these teachings as a club**

**We teach them with love**

**But we teach them**

**We are not called to be 'good people'**

**Yes, we want that, but we want more**

**To be a priest, prophet and king in our world is a sign of division**

**To follow Christ is not the way of the world**

**It is not the easy path**

**It is the path of the saints and martyrs**

**It is the narrow path**

**It is the path that leads home**