

## Reflection for the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

*Brothers and sisters: Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us. Hebrews 12:1*

Have you ever felt like you are surrounded by all the Saints in Heaven as you went about your daily life. I hope that every day we all feel and know that we are surrounded by all the Saints in Heaven as we go about your daily lives. I would suspect that most of us have had moments in our lives, be it in times of prayer, of joy, or challenging moments of life, when we have felt that the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Mother and all the Saints in Heaven were standing right next to us helping and supporting us in the moment.

The first verse of our second reading this Sunday from the Letter to the Hebrews provides us with an image and message that can be very comforting and can remind us why we seek out our Lord. Do we not want to know and feel that God and the Saints are with us in every moment of our lives. Growing up in Albuquerque, I remember relatives coming to visit us from England and what a wonderful time we would have. I remember a cousin by the name of Graham, who is about 10 years older than me, spending a summer with us, I was about ten years old. Graham would drive my sisters and I around town, and I remember he would insist that we held the doors open for a moment or two after we got in the car so that our guardian angels had time to get in the car. At the time I just figured this was Graham being Graham, but my younger sister Paula always seems to get a kick out of waiting for the guardian angels to get in the car. As I think of what Graham did considering our Second Reading this Sunday, he reminded us that we do not journey alone in this world that as people of faith we are surrounded by the Heavenly Host.

Today in our Gospel Reading taken from the Gospel of Luke with Jesus saying to His Disciples: *"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"* The Gospel message that we have this Sunday does not seem to connect with the message that is found in the second Reading this Sunday taken from the Letter to the Hebrews that speaks to us being surrounded by the Heavenly Host. Nor does our Gospel Reading seem to connect with our First Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, in which we hear of the Prophet Jeremiah being rescued from the cistern. I will have to admit that our Gospel Reading this Sunday has normally not been one of my favorite scripture readings, but just recently I read an article in *Magnificat* which states this about the first verse of our Gospel Reading: *"Pope Benedict XVI wrote that the fire is Christ's own Passion of love, 'a fire that is to be handed on. Whoever comes close to him must be prepared to be burned. This is a fire that makes things bright and pure and free and grand. Being a Christian, then, is daring to entrust oneself to this burning fire.' The fire is set ablaze when we speak the truth, like the Prophet Jeremiah, who is punished for it. Christ comes to divide us from whatever keeps us from Him, to rid us of every burden and sin that clings to us."* The quote from Pope Benedict XVI and the commentary from *Magnificat* on today's Gospel Reading provides us with a proper way to understand what Jesus is saying to His disciples in today's Gospel, and how this reading complements the other readings that we have at Mass today on the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time.

In our First and Second Readings today we are reminded that we are not alone, just as the Prophet Jeremiah was looked out for when he spoke the truth and was rescued from the cistern, so Jesus Christ is here for us today. Just like the Heavenly Host are present in our Second Reading this Sunday Jesus is here to provide a purifying fire through his passion, death and resurrection that will separate us from all that pulls us away from the love of God. The fire that Jesus speaks of in our Gospel Reading this Sunday is His love found in His passion, death and resurrection. The love that God has for us is purifying and transforming, we just need to be willing to embrace this love every day of our lives.