**20th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [18thAugust, 2013]**

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

THEME: THE PRICE OF OUR SALVATION

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Our Lord Jesus Christ uses two imageries (fire and baptism) in today’s gospel reading to convey what it cost Him to save us.

FIRE

‘**I came to cast fire upon the earth**’, says Jesus. Fire is often used in scriptures to signify purification. So here Jesus speaks of His mission to purify the world of sin. And as a goldsmith (especially the ancient goldsmith with less protective garment) feels the heat of the fire with which he purifies gold, so Jesus feels the heat of the fire (His suffering and death) by which He purifies our souls. Thus, He says: ‘**how I wish it were already over**.’

The purified gold has a new value: a value higher than that of the gold ore. And no goldsmith packs the purified gold together with the (unpurified) gold ore. Similarly, when by faith we accept Christ’s purification, our souls assume a new value – a higher value in God’s sight! This makes the mingling of our souls with those yet to be purified a problem. That is why Jesus says: ‘**henceforth in a house there will be five divided: three against two and two against three**’. A true Christian – one who has maintained the purity of his/her soul – operates on a faith-hope wavelength that makes him/her appear odd to his/her relations or neighbours who operate on a worldly wavelength.

BAPTISM

Baptism is from a Greek word which means immersion. To be immersed under water is a sign of death, and coming out of the water signifies resurrection (*cf*. Rom. 6:3-5). So, once again when Jesus speaks of His impending baptism, He means the suffering and death (and resurrection) by which He would save us.

Beloved, Jesus wholeheartedly embraced the great and painful demands of the mission of saving us; and has become our model in times of challenges and trials. Thus the second reading says: ‘**let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us**, **looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God**.’

Many purified souls have been inspired and strengthened by Jesus in their moments of challenges and trials (including executions) and today they have become a ‘**great cloud of witnesses**’ in heaven (second reading). Like a multitude of cheering fans in a stadium, may the intercessions of the saints (the cloud of witnesses) in heaven spur us onto victory over every challenge or trial which comes our way. And may Christ ultimately welcome us to the victory-crowning ceremony in heaven. Amen!