



THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
JEREMIAH 20:7-18 (NRSV)

O Lord, you have enticed me,
and I was enticed;
you have overpowered me,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all day long;
everyone mocks me.
For whenever I speak, I must cry out,
I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"
For the word of the Lord has become for me
a reproach and derision all day long.
If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"
then within me there is something like a burning
fire shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.
For I hear many whispering:
"Terror is all around!
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"
All my close friends
are watching for me to stumble.
"Perhaps he can be enticed,

and we can prevail against him,
and take our revenge on him."
But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble,
and they will not prevail.
They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.
Their eternal dishonor
will never be forgotten.
O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous,
you see the heart and the mind;
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.
Sing to the Lord;
praise the Lord!
For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hands of evildoers.
Cursed be the day
on which I was born!
The day when my mother bore me,
let it not be blessed!

The daily ornament to cut out and hang on your Jesse Tree



Cursed be the man
who brought the news to my father, saying,
"A child is born to you, a son,"
making him very glad.
Let that man be like the cities
that the Lord overthrew without pity;
let him hear a cry in the morning

and an alarm at noon,
because he did not kill me in the womb;
so my mother would have been my grave,
and her womb forever great.
Why did I come forth from the womb
to see toil and sorrow,
and spend my days in shame?

REFLECTION BY FR. DANIEL

The translation I know best of this section of Jeremiah is, Lord, you duped me and I let myself be duped." Jeremiah realizes that when he first accepted the calling to do God's work, it all seemed so nice. Now that it is hard and he has suffered, he realized that God duped him into it by making it all seem so nice at first. Of course, God does not dupe us but sometimes from our point of view, we start a relationship with God with all kinds of consolations. It is so wonderful having a spiritual life. Then hardship, persecution, dryness, and the cross come our way and now we feel like all those good feelings and noble causes were for nothing. It is like saying, "Lord, you did not tell me that this was part of the deal." Married people come to this realization when the honeymoon is over, and the real work of love begins. Jeremiah is so real because after he speaks of how he is mocked by people; he says that he will not do God's work anymore. He will not even mention God. However, when he does that, he experiences something like a burning fire inside where he cannot run away from God. Even when close friends denounce him, try to trap him, or wait for him to stumble, he goes on knowing that God is with him. Jeremiah ends with praising God for his faithfulness even as he says, "curse the day I was born! The day my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!" Jeremiah is compelled by God but is honest about the cost of following him. God knows that and in Christ, sent his Son to endure the same trials. When we have God, we know that we cannot have those things which are not of God in our lives. When we are attached them, we feel the price of choosing God. Mary and Joseph had the great experience of an angel only to realize they would end up giving birth in a manger and watch the persecution of Jesus.

FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Jeremiah realized that it was difficult at times to follow God and his ways when his friends and neighbors would make fun of him. Sometimes people can be cruel when we live our faith, but like Jeremiah, we can ask God to help us. He knew that God was always at his side as he tried to do God's work. Even when things are hard, we do them knowing God is there to help us get through it all.

TALK TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

It is important to talk about the cost of following God in today's world. Too often, it is portrayed as a life with hands folded and quaint smiles on our faces when it is really about carrying our cross. Discuss the areas that are costly for us today and explore how we can endure. It is important to be honest like Jeremiah is. Talk about the areas that are difficult and how to praise and thank God at the same time.

Back side of the daily ornament to cut out and hang on your Jesse Tree