

Family Conflict

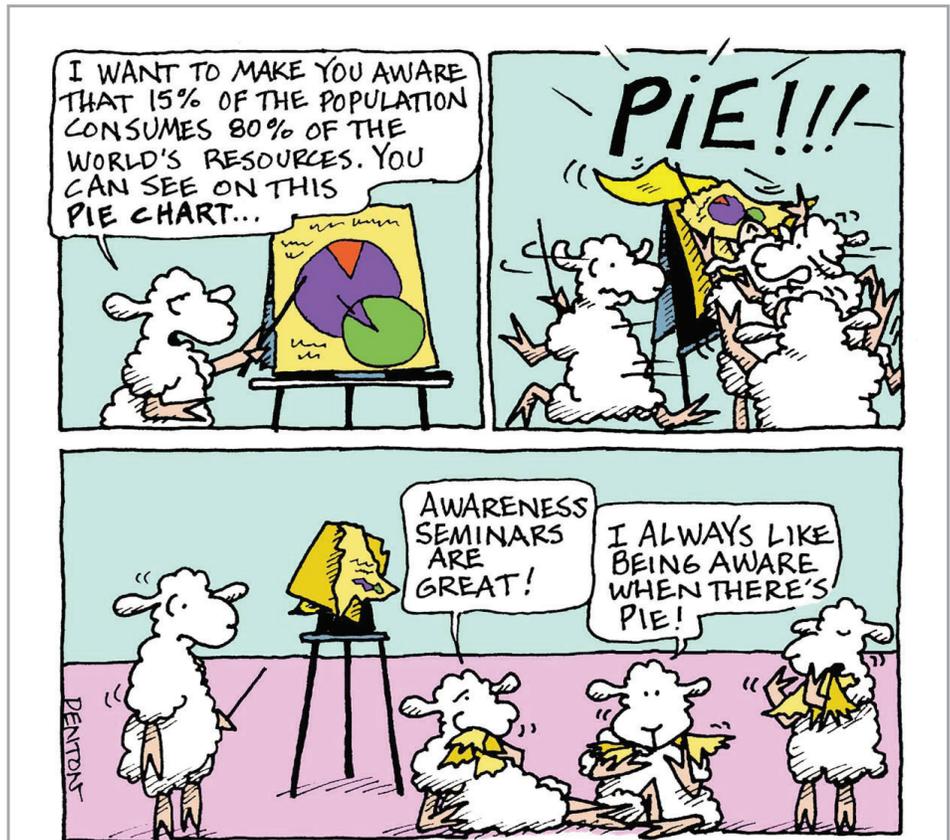
This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10 - Jeremiah in the miry cistern
- ▶ Hebrews 12:1-4 - God's treatment of his sons and daughters
- ▶ Luke 12:49-53 - Jesus' mission of division

All three readings today speak to the unavoidable conflict and divisions that arise when we try to live lives of faithfulness to God. Jeremiah knew the plight of the prophets because speaking his message from God offended the status quo. He got thrown into a

pit for it. The passage from the Letter to the Hebrews reminds the faithful that following Jesus will entail suffering, maybe even to the point of bloodshed. Jesus' teaching in the Gospel bluntly tells us that belief in him will lead to division, even among family members and loved ones.

The Gospel reading begins by speaking to Jesus' sense of urgency which was a mark of his ministry. Hurry - there is work to do! People are suffering and need help. Injustice is killing people - it



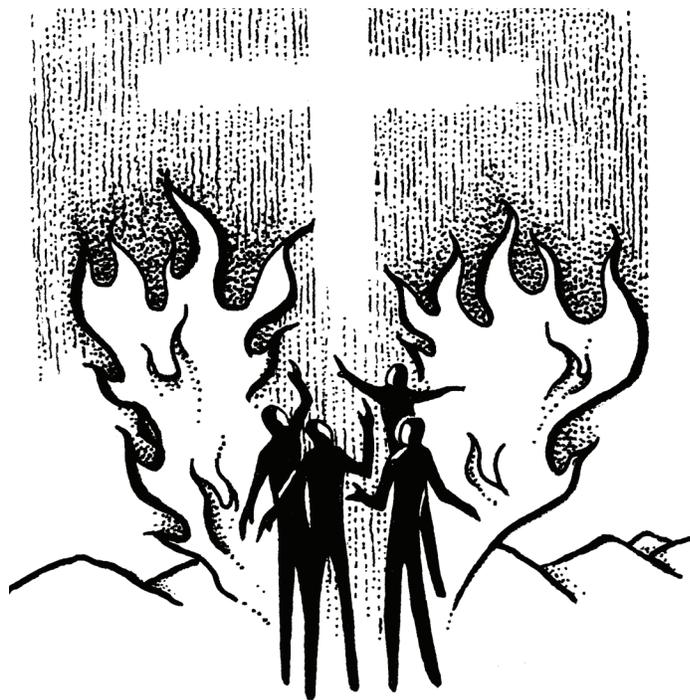
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“Let us persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.”

Sheepish Questions:

What injustices do I see in my community?
How will I respond?

must be stopped. The Kingdom of God is at hand - we must help bring it to birth! Jesus was not neutral or wishy-washy in any way. He was for justice, mercy, and compassion in all forms, and he wanted those who were sleeping their way through life to wake up and work toward these. He wanted to see a blazing fire of energy fueling the people around him.



Jesus' reference to division is a puzzling one, given that usually we think of him as a man of peace and love, not a herald of division and conflict. Yet anyone who has experienced conflict with family members or loved ones around religious issues will recognize that belief in Jesus sometimes leads to division. A gay person believes he is loved and cherished by God while his father believes it is a sin to be gay. A woman converting to Catholicism is disowned by her born-again Pentecostal mother. A spouse who attends mass is questioned for her beliefs from an atheist parter. Households - and communities, and church bodies, and nations - are divided by religious belief all the time, not because Jesus wanted division, but because he understood human nature. What one person and one community believes is God's truth is might at best be misunderstood or at worse, hateful to another person or community. On the night before he died, Jesus prayed for unity among his followers, but he also knew the reality of the division he would cause.

Questions of the Week

- ① What kind of work/ministry do you feel most passionate about that you think is urgent to be done?
- ② Have you experienced division among your family or friends because of religious beliefs? Please share.