

Thoughts on the Daily Word:

18th Week of Year. Friday 5th August. Readings: Nahum 2:1,3,3:1-3,6-7; Psalm: Deut. 32; Gospel: Matthew 16:24-28.

Assyria was a byword for cruelty in the ancient world. Remember Jonah refusing God's request to try and convert them from their ways of violence. Nahum is little known but speaks about the horror of the Assyrians and their capital, Nineveh. It flows from the fear of Judah that their turn would be next. Indeed, it was a close-run thing. Nahum speaks on behalf of all victim peoples when the tables are turned, and disaster strikes the aggressor. We still remember the downfall of the Nazi regime and the end of the Pacific war against the Japanese. We still have many programs and books on the war and its evil aggressors. We still deliberately remember the joy of the final victory. I remember the famous quote from Winston Churchill that the price of victory or peace is eternal vigilance. Jesus is saying much the same to his disciples as they refuse to face the suffering that will come. Nahum, Isaiah, and Jeremiah have the same word. Repent means eternal vigilance, being aware of our failures and being prepared to challenge them to secure peace. The kind of peace that only Christ, the Son of Man, can ultimately bring.

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 50; Gospel: Matthew 16:13-23.

Sometimes it feels that we live in good times. The freedom to speak and express ourselves, to be who we are, all these things recognise our individuality. How different it seems from times in the not-so-distant past. Democracy and individual human rights have not been around long and are still denied and threatened in large parts of the world. It is still a work in progress. The reading today, in very different times, mark significant changes in Israel's history. Essentially the movement from being a racial clan to being a community of individuals who freely choose what they believe to be right. This is, however, where the challenge is expressed. It is the choice and personal decision of Simon, but the result has immense implications. Becoming the foundation of a new community. Simon, now Peter, will struggle with that. Just

as we struggle with the implications of personal choice. Whether it is the unborn, the handicapped or the dying. Freedom brings responsibility. That can be the bit we struggle with, just as did Peter, until he received the Holy Spirit that brought the Church to life.