

Homily: June 28, 2022

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We gather to thank God who lives in our midst, even during the stormy times of our life. We commemorate St. Irenaeus, a man of peace and unity during the challenging times of the early church's life, whipped by the storm winds of Gnosticism. Irenaeus name means "peace." Pope Francis declared Irenaeus the 37th [Doctor of the Church](#) on 21 January 2022. Irenaeus guided and unified the church as a bishop in southern France during the late second century, emphasizing the four Gospels as primary sources of our faith. He defeated the heresy of Gnosticism.

As we prepare to celebrate this Eucharist, we call for God's compassion at a time when our society and church continue to suffer from storms of dissent and polarity.

"You alone have I favored,"—God was telling Israel, through the prophet, Amos. Prepare to meet your God." Amos' threatening language reminded people then and now that there are consequences when we overlook God's love and relationship with us--when we do not respect the divine lover closest to us.

"Prepare to meet your God" often means, "Prepare to die" or "Get ready for your judgment." However, "Prepare to meet your God" can also mean, "Meet God. He is in your midst." Why? Because when we stay distant from God or do not follow his will, we will suffer.

Yes, the further we depart from our essence [image of God]--the further we stray from the core purpose of our being [loving God and others], the greater the pain and suffering we will experience. The wars in Ukraine and elsewhere in our world clearly illustrate this truth. Other similar examples close to us Americans would be the gross amount of mass shootings in this country and our high suicide rate, to mention a couple of still many more examples.

So Amos may be asking us as he asked his people long ago: How much more fire of purification do you need before you return to God—before you return to honest loving? His question sounds very similar to what many mothers today are asking of US citizens, "How many more school children must die before we do something significant about guns and violence?"

The Lord is in our midst, as he was with his disciples in a boat whipped by stormy waves. Today, as always, Jesus is calling us to trust his word and to trust his presence if we want the storms of our life to calm. We pause to recall what "storms" in our personal, communal, or family life are calling us to draw closer to God.