

## God's Abundant Love

Do you know the hymn "We Stand for God"? It's an old hymn by today's standards but one that challenges us to stand up for our faith.

There are many beautiful hymns that have been composed in the last forty years. That's one of the blessings that have flowed from the Second Vatican Council. But there aren't many that challenge us in the same way as "We Stand for God".

In today's gospel Jesus makes it clear that God's love is personal and abundant. But he also indicates that we can't presume on God – we can't take God for granted. He wants us to respond to his love by being ready to declare ourselves for him in the presence of the men and women of our time.

It's a reminder that, by our baptism, we are meant to be bearers of the good news of God's love. Jesus didn't say that it would be easy. He said that his disciples would have to carry the cross as he did. There are forces at work in the world today, as there were in Jesus' day, who are opposed to belief in God and make life difficult for believers. Each year there are missionaries killed for spreading the good news.

Our message isn't always popular. So, like Jeremiah in the first reading, we have to be ready to face criticism and denunciation. The important thing is that we maintain our trust in God. "Do not be afraid", Jesus tells us. God is the one with ultimate authority and He loves us. So we can look to God with confidence that He will grant us the help we need. We can pray with assurance, as in today's psalm, "Lord, in your great love, answer me".

In standing for God we best not be intimidated by those opposed to religion. There is no shortage of efforts to intimidate but we have good news for our world and we can't afford to remain silent.

That doesn't mean that we go looking for arguments. It doesn't mean that we try to ram religion down people's throats. We need to respect their freedom as human persons to choose for themselves.

Sometimes people will try to provoke a reaction by making inflammatory remarks about our beliefs. We don't have to respond to such remarks. We don't have to play their games. But, at the right time, we can perhaps challenge them on their own beliefs and question the basis of those beliefs. We might say: "You criticise my faith. What do you believe in?" We can engage in dialogue.

Jesus makes it clear that if we are prepared to stand up for him in our lives, he will stand up for us on the day of judgement. We ask the Lord to help us be more and more aware of his love, to strengthen our trust in him, and to give us the courage we need, to be bearers of the good news of God's love in our society.