

# realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



## In today's readings:

Things look bad...but God is near. Jer 20:10-13  
Salvation is greater than the worst evil. Rom 5:12-15  
A Gospel to strengthen the apostle's resolve. Mt 10:26-33

## Next week:

Take up your cross.  
2 Kings 4:8-11,14-16;  
Romans 6:3-4,8-11;  
Matthew 10:37-42

## In a nutshell

Today's gospel message is both sobering and reassuring. It reminds us that our witness to Jesus Christ is bound to 'rock the boat' and upset the status quo. Persecution of Christians is inevitable, but fear not, for God's loving care shall never leave us. We pray for the courage to stand up for our cherished beliefs and values.



## A difficult evening

*Marriage Encounter, a worldwide marriage enrichment program for couples, has been a familiar part of the Australian Church for over 30 years. Its beginnings, however, were not always smooth sailing. A coordinating couple from those early days reminisce:*

It seems incredible now, but back in the early 1970s 'marriage enrichment' was a really strange idea to most people. Everyone knew what marriage 'counselling' was, but the idea of going on a retreat-type weekend to deepen a stable marriage was regarded with suspicion. Couples were defensive ('Are you trying to tell me there's something wrong with my marriage?'). Marriage educators were skeptical ('What's this new thing...is it psychologically sound?').

At one information evening which we hosted, the atmosphere was so hostile that it seemed to us that every person who stood up to comment or ask a question was bent on stopping this movement's

progress. We plugged away, trying to look confident and 'loving' while inside we were dying! Towards the end of the night this rugged-looking guy got up. His jaw was set in a hard line, his muscles were tensed and his eyes flashed with anger. He reminded us of a prize-fighter and we remember thinking, 'Oh no, here's comes the final death blow'. To our surprise, he directed his comments not to us but to the audience. 'What's going on?' he demanded. 'These people are trying to offer us something positive for married couples, and all we can do is shoot them down! How about giving them a fair go?'

The 'prize fighter' turned out to be a priest who 'sensed something good' in the whole idea and refused to succumb to the prevailing mood of skepticism. We will always be grateful for his courage that night, when he stood against a tide of negativity. We felt as if God had sent us a reassuring word to 'keep going'. (R&M)

## We live in difficult times

I was chatting with a group of people, one of whom was a policeman and another a priest. As the conversation moved on to sensationalist media headlines about pedophilia and police corruption, both men expressed their sadness about the damage inflicted on the morale of the average honest cop and dedicated priest. Both men had experienced insults hurled at them just for walking down the street. Said the priest, 'A young man choosing priesthood these days requires great courage and resolve'.



## church below the rooftops

### Think...Talk

By the time today's gospel came to be written, many Christians had already died for their faith. Would you be prepared to die for your faith? What thoughts and reactions does this question raise in you?

### The cost of discipleship

In professional circles, Frank is a high-flyer. But in neighbourhood terms he is an ordinary man who chooses to live a simple lifestyle and to give away much of his handsome income.

With his earning power he could drive an expensive new car, but instead he drives a 15 year old Datsun. Sometimes an unsuspecting colleague will joke: 'I guess your other car is a Mercedes'. 'Actually this is the only car I've got,' Frank will reply.

He acknowledges it is a small gesture given the enormous issues of materialism at stake, but a practical gospel witness all the same.



**RealPeople** offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

A publication of  
The Story Source, © 1992-2002.

[www.TeresaPirola.net](http://www.TeresaPirola.net)