

*You duped me . . . and I let myself be duped . . . everyone mocks me . . . I say to myself . . .
I will speak in his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart . . .*
(First reading for today)

I can imagine St. Peter saying this in reference to the tragic end of Jesus on the cross. The Gospels indicate that Peter had his own ideas of where Jesus would lead his followers. The procession on Palm Sunday awoke Peter's imagination to the possible installation of a new regime to be presided over by Jesus as a "new David" – his closest followers being handed keys of office. And then came that supper, overcast with omens of failure. Then the arrest without a fight! Peter's expectations shattered, the organization dispersed, he himself in danger. Addressing the now defunct Jesus, he might echo the prophet Jeremiah: *You duped me . . . and I let myself be duped. How gullible could I be?*

Peter's misperception of where Jesus was leading is evident in his disbelief in Jesus's warning in today's reading of imminent violent opposition. *God forbid, Lord*, he says, *No such thing shall ever happen to you.* And he might have added: *That's not the way I see it. What I see is a world reformed by your healing touch (new programs?) – and my happy self, having a role in it.* We know how Jesus reacted to that. *Get behind me . . . You are an obstacle to me. You . . . are thinking as human beings do.*

And that's when Peter begins to feel confused, duped. But what was Jesus predicting? Isn't it what happens all the time down through human history? As insecure beings we immediately construct geodesic domes (one civilization after another) to stop time or to control the future in one way or the other, lacking trust toward a mute environment – even toward neighbors next door. Trust your suspicions, everybody pays cash, build walls of various kinds – like, for example, an ideology that dupes millions into thinking they are a master race.

And what are we doing – what does history say? We seem always to be setting ourselves up for a fall – empires gone, economies in ruins, competence questioned, our best engineering so easily and unintentionally evolving into a menace? We are witnessing one of these collapses today – our expensive efforts to unify the world since my childhood no longer seeming to pay off. Always insecure! So why should Peter be surprised that this enterprise of Jesus, as Peter understands it, should fall apart – leaving him embarrassed before a mere serving girl who associates him with Jesus?

But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart . . . The "program" initiated by Jesus – as *Peter* understood it – might succumb violently to opposition, but not his Gospel. Why? Because in our heart of hearts his Gospel embodies what we all really long for – not just security confined within our geodesic domes – but a resurrection, our release from the winding sheets that mummify us – the release of that core (*one's soul?*) placed within us by the very Source of our being: of faith, hope and love – mutual trust of each other and of nature as kindred as well. From the very core of our being we long to come outdoors into an Easter Sun-Day of cosmic grace and kinship. The Church's mission is to cultivate that ember from age to age – even though clumsily at times.

