

### **Set the World on Fire**

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Imagine a young woman who feels a strong call to become a missionary. She's bright, talented, and from a close-knit family with dreams of her becoming a doctor, settling down nearby, and continuing family traditions. When she announces that she's joining a mission organization and heading to a remote country to serve the poor, her decision is met with shock, resistance, even anger. "Why would you throw away your future?" some ask. Others are hurt, unable to understand how she could "leave everything behind." Though she loves her family dearly, her heart burns with a love for Christ and a desire to serve him fully. Her choice causes division, but it is born of conviction, not rebellion.

This is the kind of tension Jesus speaks about: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" (Luke 12:49). His words are not about destruction but transformation. The fire he brings is the fire of divine love—purifying, refining, and consuming anything that stands in the way of total devotion to God. It is a fire that calls us to holiness, and like any fire, it can be uncomfortable, especially when it reveals our attachments to sin, comfort, or the opinions of others.

Jesus goes on to say something even more startling: that he has not come to bring peace but division. Not because he delights in conflict but because he knows that the truth of the Gospel will confront people's hearts and not everyone will accept it. Choosing to follow Christ may mean walking a road that others in your own family will not understand. It may mean standing alone in your convictions. Jesus prepares us for this. The Gospel divides not by nature, but by response, some accept it, others reject it. And in that response, relationships may be tested.

Yet this division is not without purpose. It is a test of loyalty. Jesus calls for a love that surpasses even our deepest human ties, a love that is willing to stand with him above all else. This is not easy. But the reward is great: the joy of walking in truth, the peace of a clear conscience, and the fire of a heart fully alive in God's love.

In the Catholic understanding, this passage reminds us that discipleship is serious business. It demands courage. It demands faithfulness. And it demands that we allow Christ's love to burn away whatever keeps us from him. But in doing so, we become vessels of that fire in the world—sources of light, truth, and healing in a world that desperately needs all three.

St. Catherine of Siena once said, "Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire." May we have the courage to do just that.

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Rudy