

12TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A

THEME: **FEAR NO ONE**

Our liturgy of the word for today's Mass challenge us to preach Christ through our words and actions without fear. The first reading tells us how the prophet Jeremiah trusted in the power of God when he faced opposition for his prophetic ministry. He was intimidated by attacks upon his character, but he was unafraid to speak out in the name of the Lord.

The psalmist in today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 69) trusts in God when he was misunderstood and ill-treated even by his brothers and relatives. In our second reading St. Paul assures the Christians in Rome that they need not be afraid of opposition because they share in the death of Jesus and because they are united with Christ, the new Adam, in his Resurrection.

Today's Gospel reading is taken from the end of Jesus' instruction to his disciples as he sends them forth to carry on his mission of preaching and healing. He asks them to live simple lives and to expect opposition and rejection. After having foretold future opposition and persecution, Jesus encourages his disciples to stand firm.

He tells them, "Do not fear!" "Do not be afraid!" Instead of shrinking from their task, they are to proclaim the Good News boldly, because they will be protected just as Jeremiah was assured of God's protection. Hence, Jesus commands his disciples not to fear their persecutors. He presents before them the image of the sparrow to reinforce the disciples' trust and hope in God. The readings hint at the opposition we future Christians will encounter as we carry on the work of Jesus in the world, and they encourage us to persevere in doing the work of Jesus. They assure us that we will be successful, despite the opposition we encounter.

We need not be afraid because our life is in the hands of a loving God. Sometimes we are afraid that we will make a wrong decision. At other times, we are afraid of what others will think when we speak up for Jesus. We are afraid of what the future will bring our children. We are also afraid of growing old. Sometimes we are afraid of what bad health will bring us. At the root of these fears is the fear of loss.

Every fear we have is grounded in the knowledge that we have something or someone to lose. I can lose my job, family, house, money, health and even life itself. Rejection and loss are the basis of our fears. But we forget one thing: our heavenly Father knows exactly what is happening. What a release from fear it is to know that God is on our side; that our life is in the hands of a loving God!

My dear friends in Christ, any time fear grips our life we need to remember that being faithful to Christ in this life is much more important than our fear of rejection and loss. Also, let us take a moment to recall some of the great promises of God.

Let us remind ourselves that God cares – we are each a dear child of his, and he cares for each of us. "Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." The last verse of Psalm 27 sums it up nicely: "Trust in the Lord. Have Faith; do not despair. Trust in the Lord."