

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 21, 2020

Do Not Be Afraid

Scripture Background

Connections to Church Teaching and Tradition

- God alone rescues us (CCC, 169).
- The prophets heard God's call to repentance and faithfulness. They prepared for the intervention of God in human history (CCC, 2584).
- The Church is the instrument of God's works, an assistant in God's work of salvation (CCC, 737, 778).
- The Church's deepest vocation is to live as communion. The Church is a community (LG, 51; CCC, 959), even a family.

Jeremiah 20:10–13 Jeremiah, one of the four major prophets in the Old Testament, was chosen by God when he was very young, and he served faithfully for five decades. When Jeremiah received his call, Judah was under Assyrian domination; the people had fallen into the worship of pagan gods; the Temple was in disrepair; the Law of Moses was disregarded. Jeremiah's prophetic call came in the year 626 BC, on the eve of the religious reform of King Josiah. Unfortunately, Josiah died in a military campaign in 609 BC, and the reforms were never fully realized. During the last half of Jeremiah's career, the Assyrian empire collapsed and Babylon became the supreme power, which eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile of God's people in 587 BC. Chapter 20 of Jeremiah contains his confessions, his inner struggle with his vocation, and his complaints for the persecution that he suffered on behalf of God. Despite his lamentation, he ends with praise: "Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers" (v. 13).

Psalms 69:8–10, 14, 17, 33–35 (14c) Psalm 69 is a lament. The psalmist was faithful to God, and ardent zeal for the Temple of God had consumed him. Nevertheless, the psalmist suffered shame and dishonor. He became a "stranger" to his own "kindred," and an alien to his "mother's children" (v. 8). The scorn of those who insulted God fell on him. Brokenhearted and in despair, he "looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (v. 20). Although the psalmist expresses intense misery, he ends on a note of hope, a declaration of praise and confidence in God's ability to save: "The LORD hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds" (v. 33).

Romans 5:12–15 The Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) proclaims Adam's sin as a "happy fault" that led to the redemption of the human race in Jesus Christ, which far outweighed what was lost in the fall. Paul explained that through Adam's sin, all people were alienated from God. Yet, by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, all were restored to a right relationship with God. For just as in Adam all die, so also all shall live in Christ. To understand Paul's thought, it is necessary to recognize the Jewish self-understanding of the time. The Jewish people did not think of themselves as individuals, but as part of a family, a clan, or a nation. Because of human solidarity, all people actually sinned in Adam. Adam's sin was not one person's sin but the sin of all. Thus, through one person, Adam, death entered the world. Likewise, through one person, Jesus Christ, all have a share in his resurrection of the dead. Paul emphasized that this gift of eternal life is a free gift that sinful humanity did not deserve. Through God's mercy, the free gift of righteousness was given "in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ" (v. 15).

Matthew 10:26–33 Jesus came as the full revelation of God to the world, but many were obstinate and refused to believe the truth of his words. Despite the darkness of unbelief, light came through the proclamation of Jesus' faithful apostles. Jesus warned them, however, that just as they shared his mission of proclaiming God's reign, they would also share in his Passion. Students were not above their teachers, and slaves could not outrank their masters (v. 24). Jesus' disciples would be despised by their fellow Jews and rejected by members of their own families. When they were brought to trial for their faith, they should not be concerned about how they would defend themselves. The Holy Spirit would inspire them to be faithful witnesses (v. 19). Fear of persecution and death should not deter them from boldly speaking the message they received. They should not fear

those who could kill them; a greater peril would be to lose their immortal souls. The one they should fear is the evil one who could lead them to eternal destruction.

Jesus encouraged his followers by reminding them of their worth before God. If God cared for the tiny sparrows that were sold in the Temple for sacrifice, how much more valued were God's children? Despite the coming darkness and opposition, the Twelve must be fearless in proclaiming the light and truth of the Gospel. If they are faithful in their task, Jesus would defend them on the Day of Judgment.

Preparation

Lectionary for Mass #94A

Jeremiah 20:10–13

Psalms 69:8–10, 14, 17,
33–35 (14c)

Romans 5:12–15

Matthew 10:26–33

Fear is a human response meant to protect us and keep us safe. The early Christians, and indeed, Christians today, face fear when living the Gospel message. But Jesus reassures us that God's love and concern for us is so encompassing that every hair on our heads is known to him. Through God's love, we can stand firm and not be afraid, knowing that those who could hurt the body cannot hurt the soul.

Objectives

- To explain to children that God loves and cares for each individual person.
- To help them understand that God's love gives us courage and that we can place our hope and trust in him.

Preparation and Materials

- Read the Season Background, the Lectionary readings, and the Scripture Background.
- Bookmark the appropriate readings (see page xv) in the Lectionary, children's Lectionary, or Bible. Place the book in a convenient location for the leader.
- Write the words of dismissal on a card for the priest celebrant.
- Prepare the words of the song the children will sing as they gather in the space for the Liturgy of the Word.
- Select volunteers (older children or adults) to proclaim the readings.
- Display the Responsorial Psalm refrain lyrics.
- Display the Apostles' or Nicene Creed.
- Prepare intercessions for the Prayer of the Faithful adapted for the needs of the Church, world, oppressed or marginalized, and local community.

Prayer Leader Reflection Questions

- ? Have you ever been persecuted for your commitment to announce the Good News of God? How did your faith and trust in God help you?
- ? What fears might young children face?

Procession Following the Collect of the Mass, the priest celebrant picks up the Lectionary and invites those who would like to participate in the Liturgy of the Word with children to come forward and gather in the center aisle. The people who will lead the children out and facilitate the Liturgy of the Word also come forward at this time. Holding the Lectionary so that all can see, the priest celebrant sends the children forth using his own words or the following:

Priest: **Jesus taught us to listen for his voice so we may know God better and live as he wants us to live. We send you with your leader(s) to listen carefully to God's Word. Pay attention to what God is saying to you today. May the Holy Spirit help you understand and live this Good News. Go now in peace.**

The leader processes out holding the Lectionary, and the children follow behind. The parish music minister may have selected a song of dismissal for the assembly to sing while the children leave. A good option is "Listen to God's Word" (Haas).

Centering Continue to sing the song of dismissal that the assembly sang as you left the church. Or sing the refrain from "Be Not Afraid" (Dufford), or "Christ Be Our Light" (Farrell), or have instrumental music playing as the children gather in the space for the Liturgy of the Word.

Place the Lectionary on the ambo or lectern. Light the candle placed by the ambo or lectern, and then lead the following prayer:

**O God,
help us open our hearts to listen to the wisdom of your Word
and help us remember that wisdom in our everyday lives.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Children: Amen.

First Reading Jeremiah 20:10–13

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 69:8–10, 14, 17, 33–35 (14c) *Sing the same musical setting that is used in your parish's celebration of the liturgy.*

Second Reading Romans 5:12–15

Gospel Acclamation *Sing the Gospel Acclamation used in your parish's celebration of the liturgy.*

Gospel Reading Matthew 10:26–33

Homily/Reflection ? Have you ever been afraid?

? What have you been scared of?

All people are scared of something at one time or another—even grownups sometimes feel afraid!

? What does it feel like when you are scared? (*Your heart might beat very fast; you might feel sick or dizzy; tummy ache; crying.*)

Being afraid is normal. Even Jesus' disciples sometimes felt afraid too. Do you remember how they all locked themselves in a room after the crucifixion? They were afraid then. Do you remember how St. Peter denied Jesus three times just before the crucifixion? He denied knowing Jesus because he was afraid of what people would do to him if he admitted to knowing him.

Remember they lived in a land that was occupied by Rome. Violence and persecution were a part of the people's everyday lives, so people felt scared all the time. Today's Gospel is Jesus reminding the Apostles that they should not fear any person. Jesus meant that their souls had nothing to fear from those who might hurt their bodies. This was an important message for the Apostles to hear. Think about how much the disciples were suffering because of their belief in Jesus. Jesus explained to the Apostles that they were all very precious to God—so precious, that God knew how many hairs were upon their heads. God watches over us so lovingly and with such care.

? So do you think the Apostles felt less scared after Jesus reassured them? Do you think they felt some peace of mind?

God knows everything about us and loves us very much. If anything were to happen to one of God's children, he would know about it and take care of that person. Jesus didn't want fear of persecution to stop the disciples from spreading his message. He wanted the disciples to be brave and ready to face the possibility of persecution. He wanted them to understand that no matter what happened, God would be with them, and that saving souls was more important than being persecuted.

God is also with each of us, caring for us, and loving us. Like the disciples, he wants for us to be brave in the face of any troubles or worries. Our mission is to live out Christ's message and to share that message with everyone. Sometimes we might be afraid of doing the right and good thing. Jesus assures us that when we are scared of what others might say or do, we should still stand strong in living out the Gospel. So, if we ever feel worried about something, we can place our trust in God. When we pray, we can give our fears and worries to God and ask God to take care of it for us. Sometimes things are very hard to understand, and we may see people having problems that seem too big to fix, all we can do is trust that God always wants to bring light to darkness. God always wants goodness to win. God always wants us to feel loved, even in hard times. So, when we offer our fears and worries to God, that also helps us grow in faith, because we learn to depend upon God, and because God is big enough to handle it all.

Before you leave today, think about a time you may have felt scared about doing something that is right and good. Think about how God loves and cares for you, and how he wants us to learn to be fearless in living out Jesus' Good News.

Profession
of Faith
Prayer of the
Faithful

Following the homily or reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith. Together, sing or recite the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. Refer the children to the words of the prayer that you have displayed.

Leader: **We trust in our loving God, who cares for us so much we have nothing to be afraid of. So we have faith that he will hear us as we present to him our needs. Please respond, "Lord, hear us."**

That the bishop of Rome, our Holy Father, and all bishops, priests, and deacons joyfully and effectively proclaim the Good News, we pray: *Lord, hear us.*

That the president, Congress, and the courts may carry out their duties in peace and justice, and with reverence for God and God's laws, we pray: *Lord, hear us.*

That those who are afraid of doing what is right and good may have courage in Christ, we pray: *Lord, hear us.*

That those in our faith community may act to protect the unborn, the ill from euthanasia, the imprisoned from capital punishment, and those in need from starvation, we pray: *Lord, hear us.*

Invite other intercessions from the children, or add intercessions based on the current needs of the Church, the world, the oppressed or marginalized, and the local community. Conclude each of the children's petitions with, "we pray," and invite the response, "Lord, hear us."

That those who have died may live with God forever, and that those who mourn them may be comforted, we pray: *Lord, hear us.*

**Heavenly Father,
to you we have entrusted our lives.
With you we are not afraid.
Listen to our prayers
and fill us with your Spirit.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

Children: Amen.

Quietly return with the children to the main assembly. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.